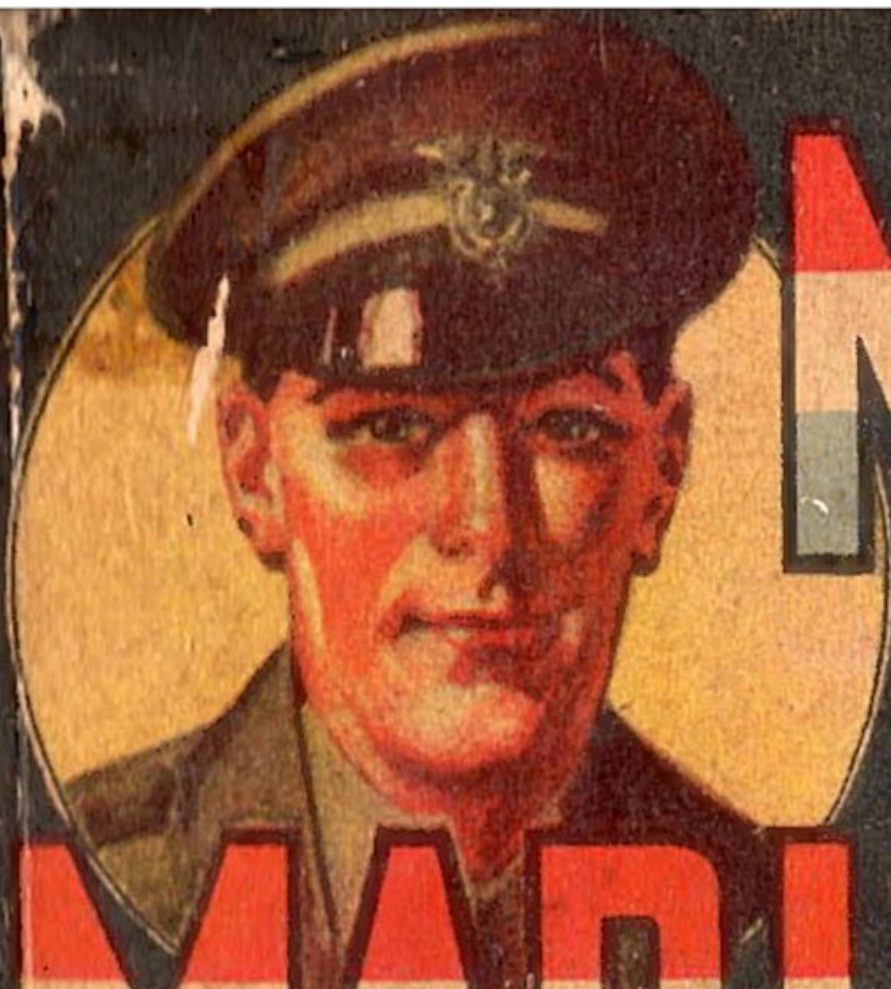




MAC OF THE MARINES IN CHINA



THE
BIG LITTLE
BOOK

MAC OF THE MARINES

In China

***By* MARK SMITH**

***Illustrated by*
FRANK J. HOBAN**

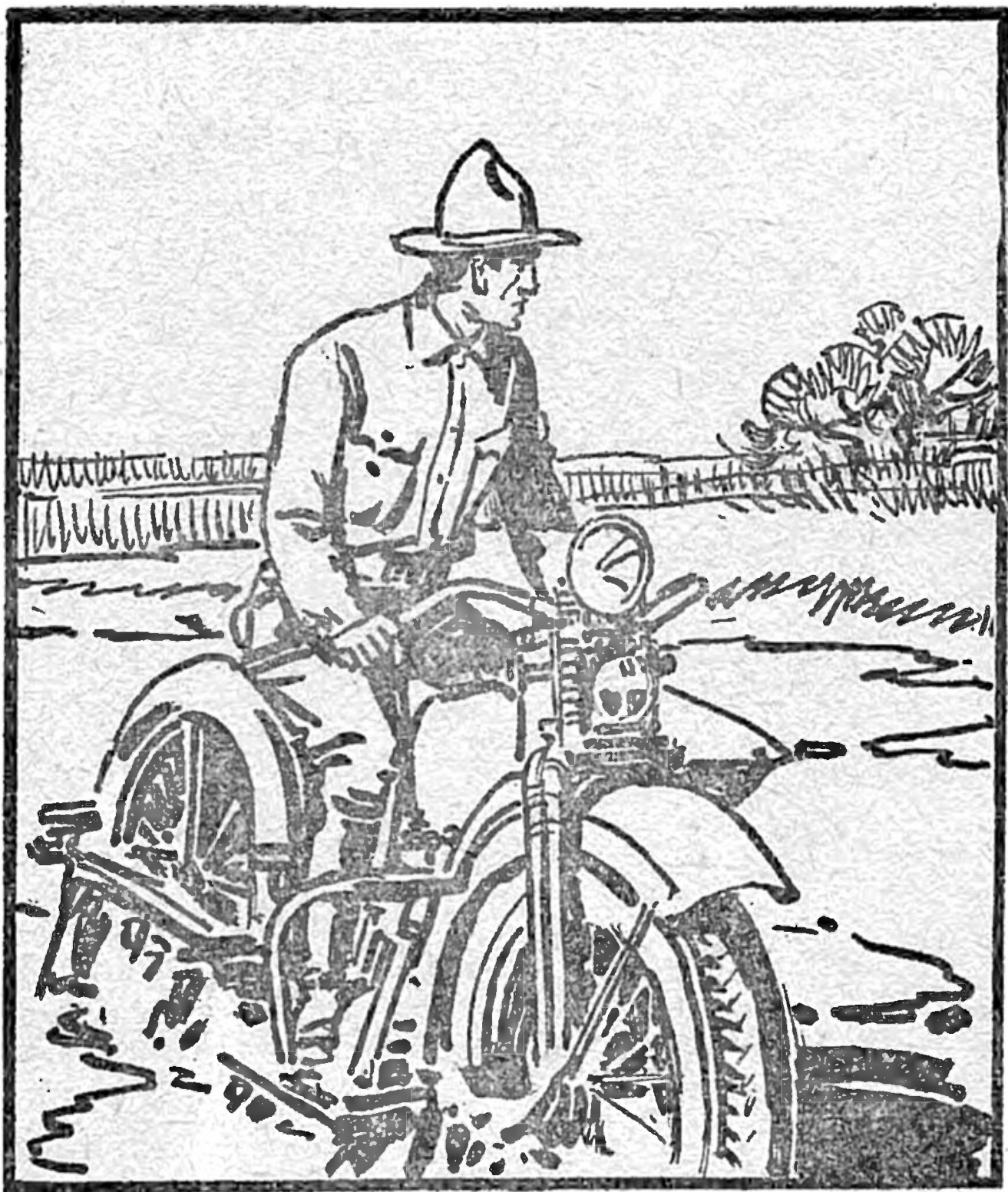
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Mac Plowed Through the Mud

MAC OF THE MARINES IN CHINA

CHAPTER I

IN DANGEROUS TERRITORY

“I’d give a month’s pay,” Mac thought grimly, “for a mile of good old U. S. A. concrete road. I’d even settle for macadam!”

As Mac voiced this wish, his motorcycle and sidecar plowed into

another of a seemingly endless string of mudholes. That mudhole was deeper than the others and the engine quit with one last snort of disgust.

“That settles it,” Mac growled and swung off into three feet of muddy water. “These dispatches from the Consul at Saung will never get to Shanghai tonight!”

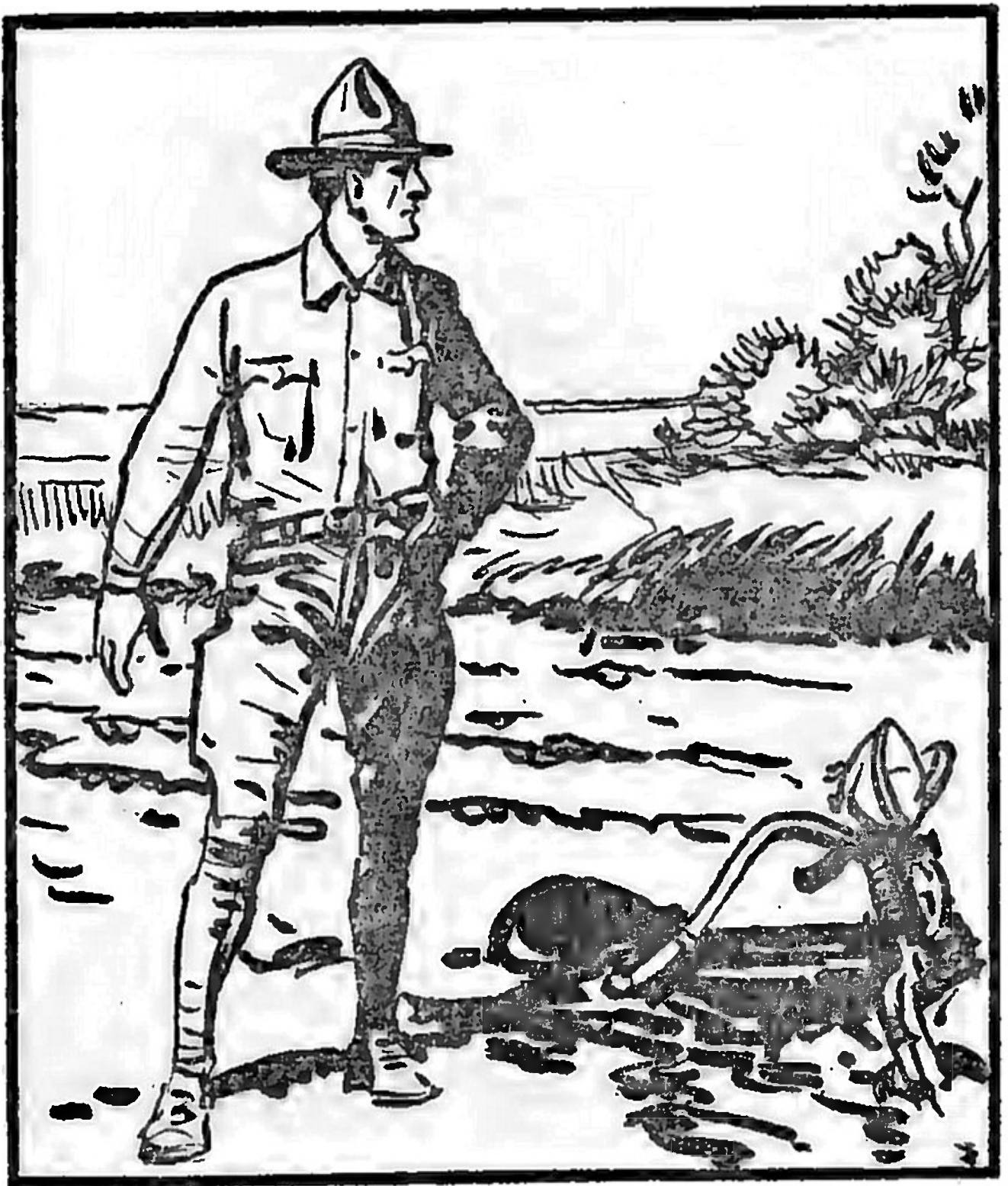
Sergeant MacLain of the U. S. Marines, stationed at Shanghai,



In Three Feet of Muddy Water

China, waded out of the mudhole and looked up and down the road for some sign of a truck—or even an ox-cart.

The road was deserted. The flat rice fields on either side were empty of life. There was a good reason, for this was 1937 and the Japanese and Chinese armies were at each other's throats not many miles away. On a quiet day you could hear the artillery and at



The Road Was Deserted

night you could see the yellow glare of great fires burning in Shanghai itself.

Mac, giving up hope of a tow, was about to get back in the mud and pull the machine out himself. He was big enough to do it and "plenty strong." Years of Campaigning, in the Canal Zone, in the Philippines, on special duty in Africa and now here in China, had made Sergeant Mac one of the



He Tugged at the Motorcycle

toughest Leathernecks in the service. Not tough the usual sense, just hard as nails, rough and ready for any emergency.

Mac was soft spoken. He never raised his voice. He did not have to shout. His men in the corps obeyed him. They respected his ability and judgment above that of many a superior officer.

But all that did not help Mac get that motorcycle and sidecar out of

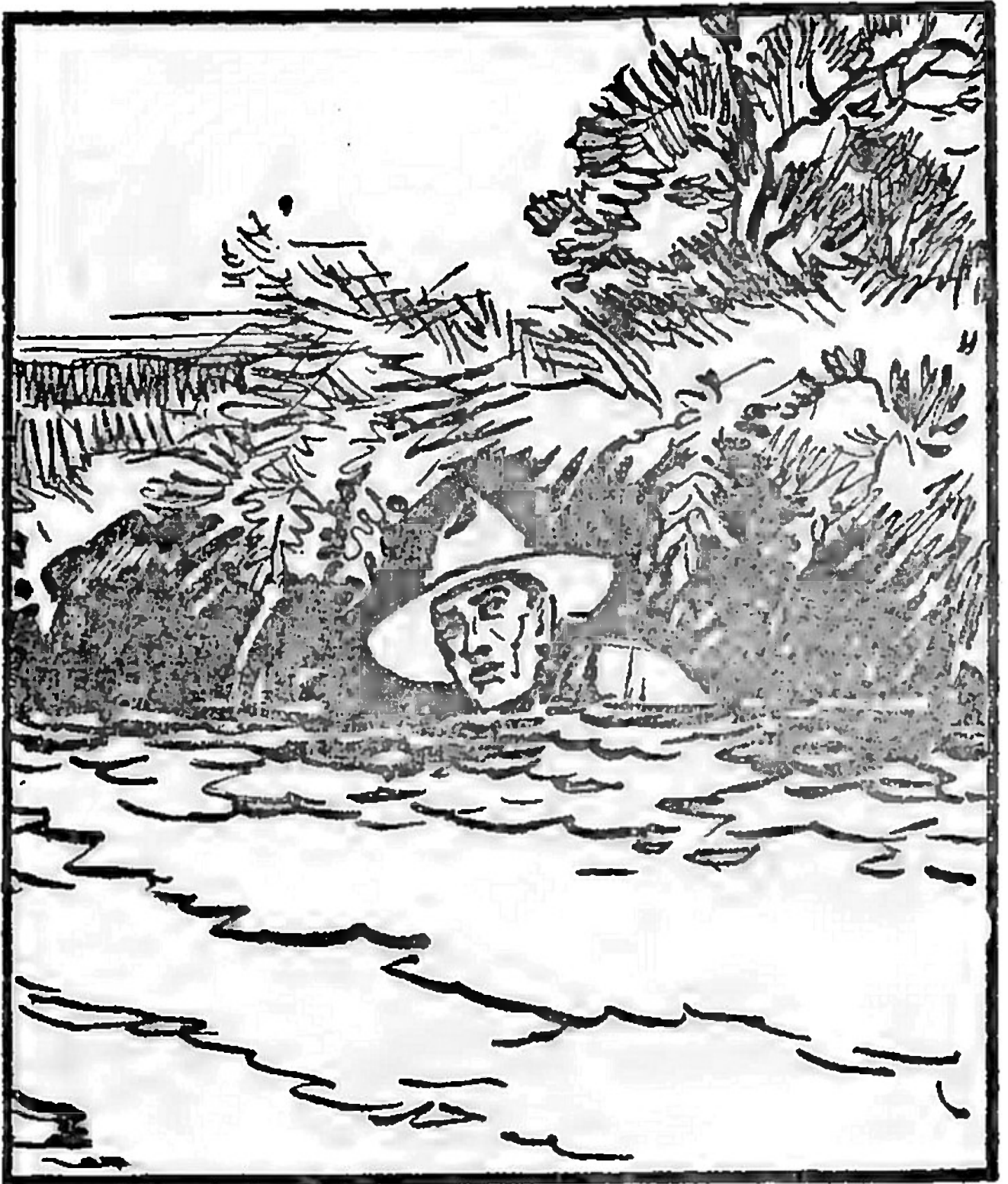


Sergeant Mac of the Marines

the mud. He waded in, detached the sidecar and was about to pull it out when his keen ears caught a low droning sound. It came nearer with a speed that warned Mac it could be only one thing . . . a fast fighting plane, flying low.

With one leap Mac was out of the mudhole. A second leap carried him onto a shallow ditch beside the road. It was full of water.

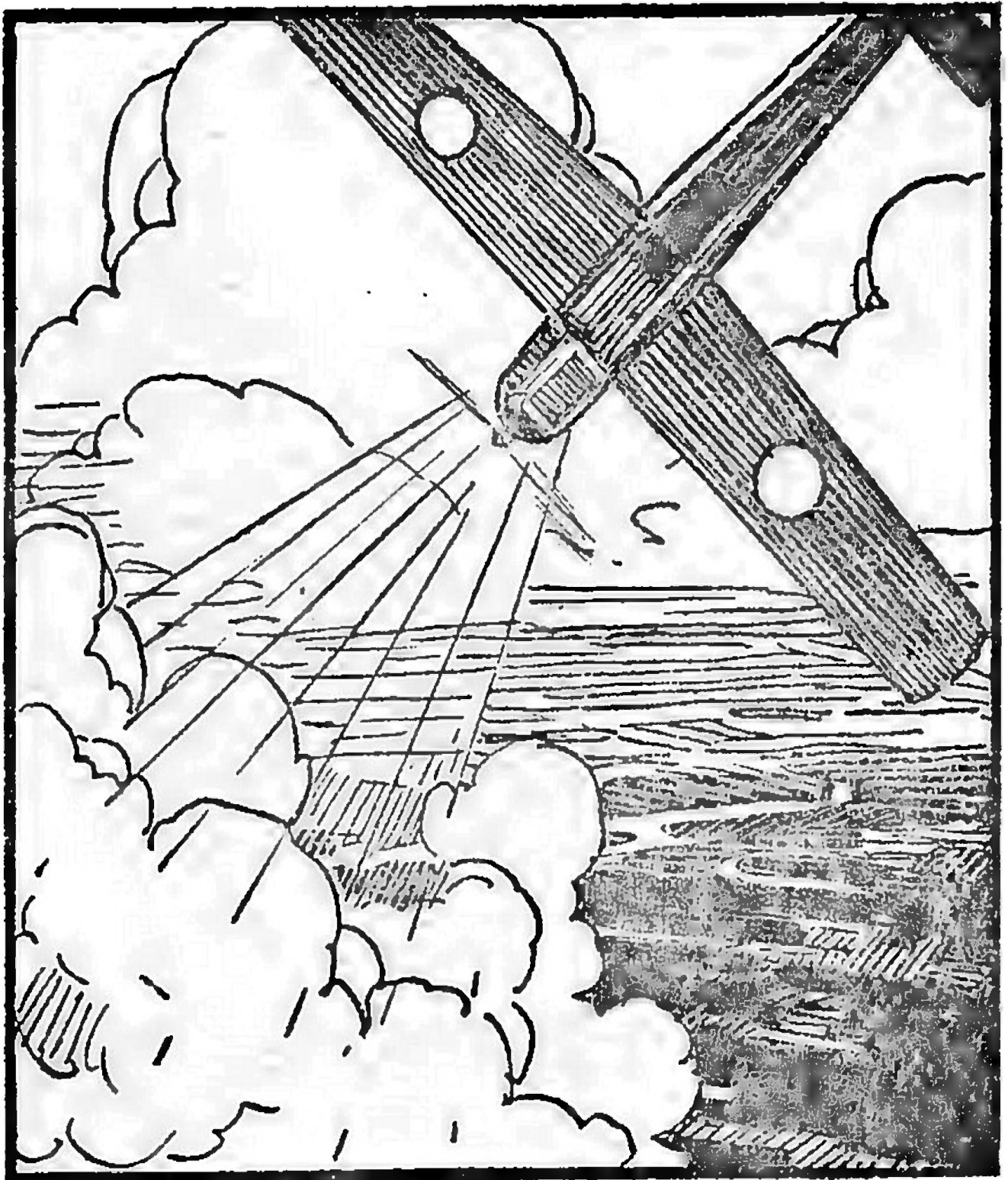
Mac pressed hard against a



He Heard a Low Droning Sound

slightly overhanging bank with only his head out of the murky water—and he was not a second too soon.

The pursuit ship nosed down and raked the road with a savage burst of machine-gun fire. Mac heard the drumming thud as the stream of bullets plowed up the dirt and the sharper rattle and whine of ricocheting steel as the pilot found his target and riddled the



The Pursuit Ship Nosed Down

motorcycle and sidecar with holes.

“He’ll be back for me,” Mac commented to himself.

He was right. The pursuit plane roared into a climb, banked and turned sharply and came thundering back!

The pilot sent a stream of steel-jacketed messengers of death into the ditch. They churned the water barely a foot from Mac’s head. They splashed muddy water in his



A Stream of Bullets Came Dangerously Close

face, but the overhanging bank saved him.

The plane climbed for another turn and Mac caught a glimpse of the insignia of a Jap naval squadron on the fuselage. He made a note of the plane's number.

"Just in case I live to report it," he added as an afterthought.

He began to wonder how many dives the pilot would need to get him. There was no use moving.

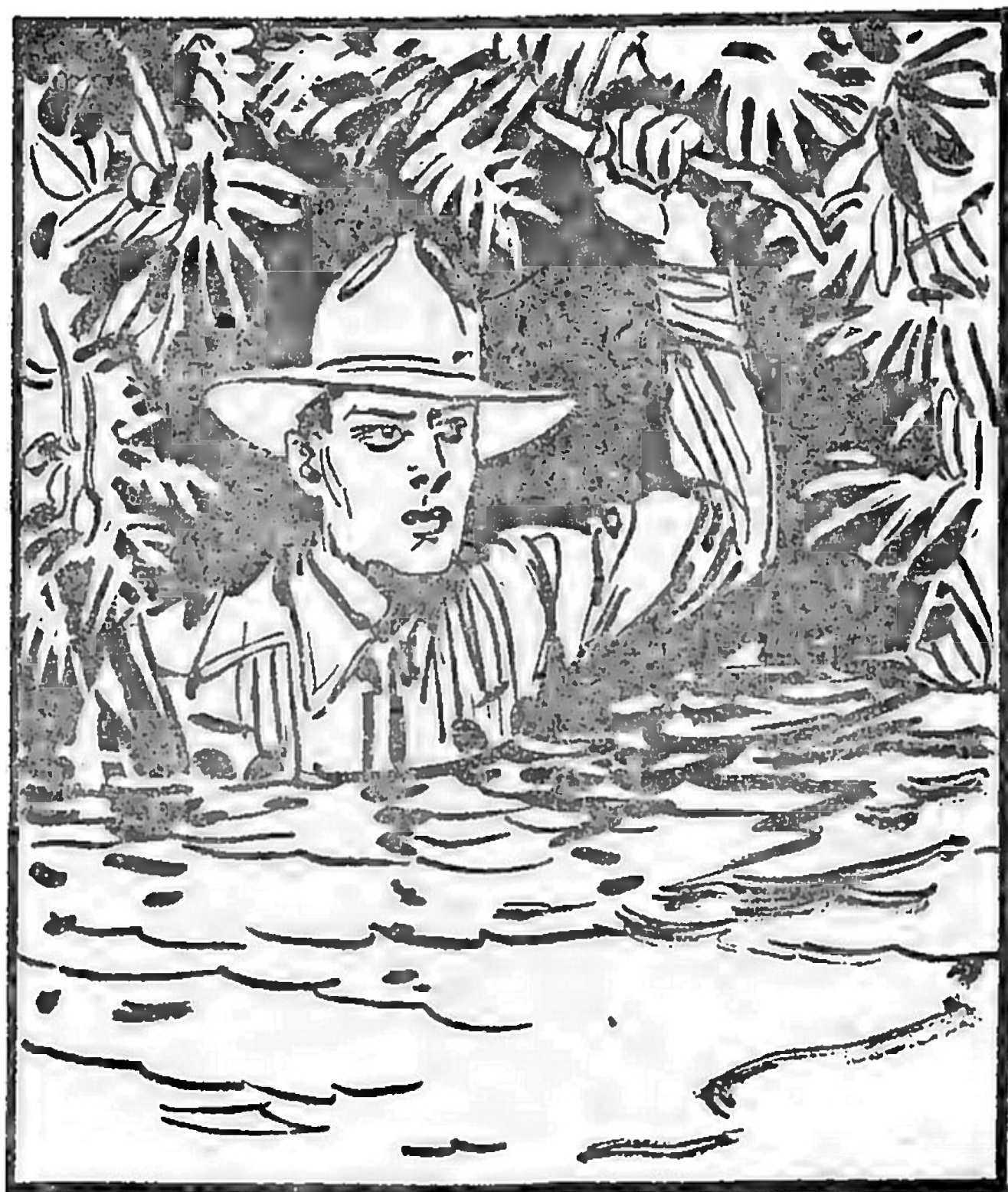


Mac Looked up at the Plane

There was no other place to hide. He had no way of showing the Jap that he was not a Chinese soldier which the pilot undoubtedly mistook him to be.

“If he misses me this time he ought to be sent back to gunnery school,” Mac thought and again pressed hard against the protecting bank of the ditch.

Sergeant MacLain’s eyes followed the plane circling above him—



There Was No Other Place to Hide

then he shut his eyes and clenched his fists as the plane swooped downward at terrific speed.

He knew now that only a miracle could save him.

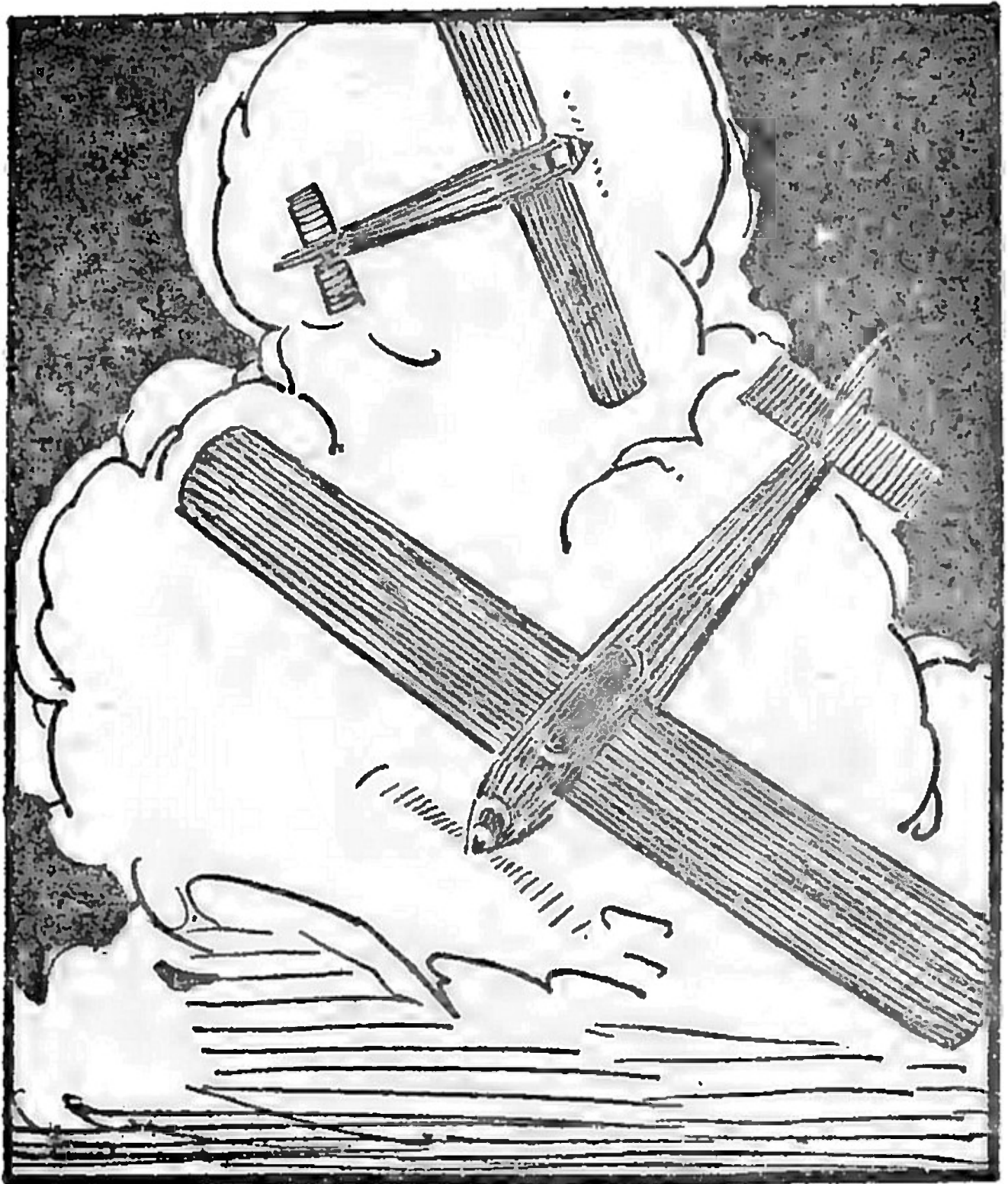


Only a Miracle Could Save Him Now

CHAPTER II

WAR BIRDS CRASH

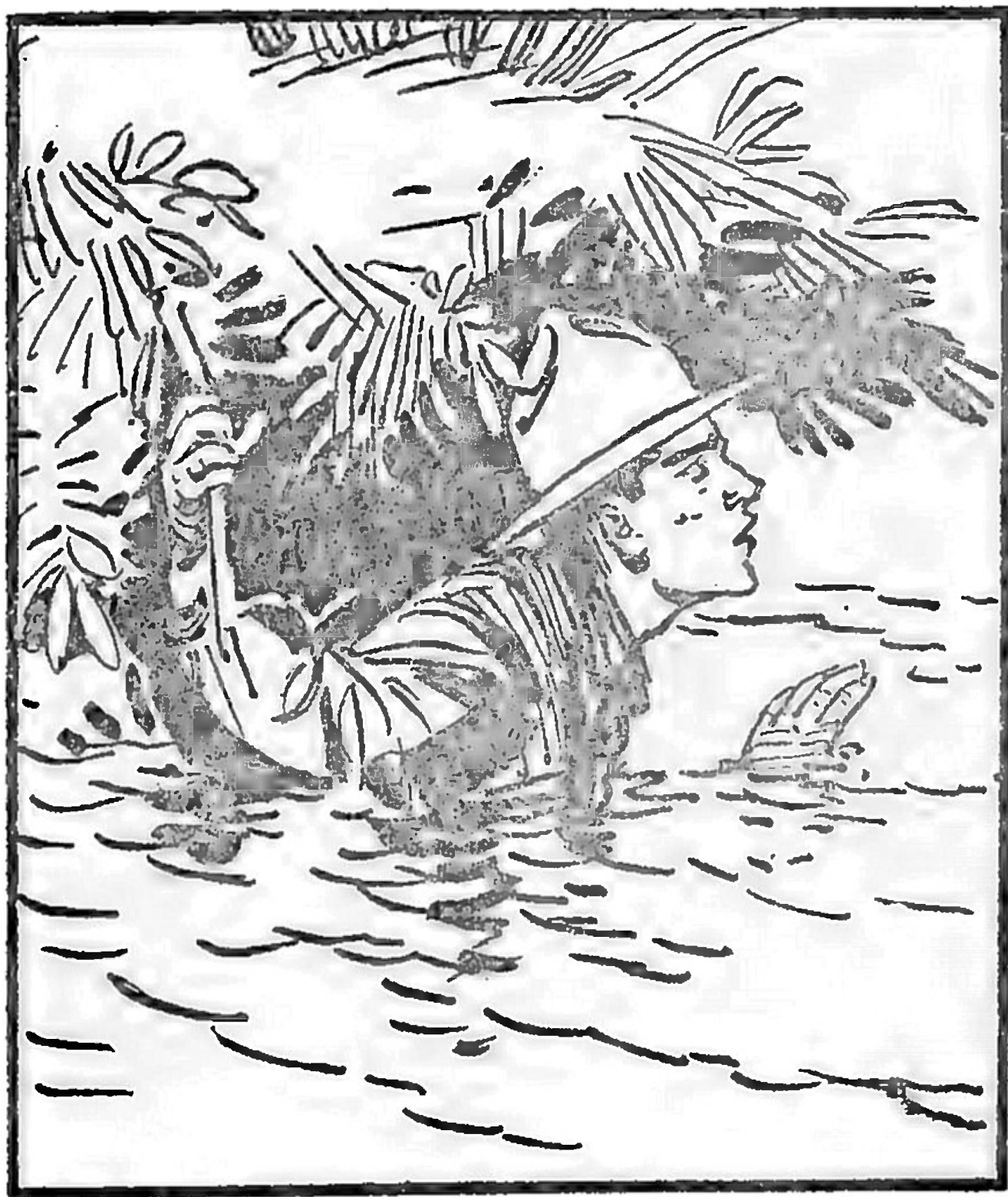
Again came the harsh rattle of machine-gun fire, but to Mac's surprise it was not coming from the pursuit ship rushing toward him at two hundred miles an hour. It came from behind him and was accompanied by the whacking, ear-



Another Ship Came in Sight

splitting sound of a single-seater coming out of a long power dive.

Mac turned his head in time to see the second ship level off and bank in time to avoid a head-on collision with the first plane. Even in that brief instant Mac recognized the newcomer as a Chinese ship and breathed a sigh of relief. He knew that for the next few minutes those two in the air would give no thought to him. He saw



Mac Watched the Planes Breathlessly

them both go into steep climbs for altitude.

Pulling himself out of the muddy ditch, Mac looked around for a more protected hiding place. He knew that if the Jap finished off the newcomer he would be next on the list.

A hundred yards down the road stood the ruins of a farmer's hut. Only the mud-clay walls were left but it was a likely spot and Mac



He Looked for a Better Hiding Place

headed for it on the run. In the ruins Mac found a hole surrounded by high piles of debris. He knew he would be safe there. That is, safe from everything but a bomb such as had blown the house to bits in the first place.

From his protecting shelter Mac watched the two airplanes. They were a thousand feet up, jockeying for position. Occasionally one or the other let loose a burst of



Mac Ran for the Hut

machine-gun fire. They were like boxers, sizing each other up before plunging into a battle from which only one could hope to come out alive.

“A couple of green kids just out of ground school,” Mac guessed after watching them for several minutes.

But even as Mac reached this conclusion, the two pilots banked toward each other, their machine

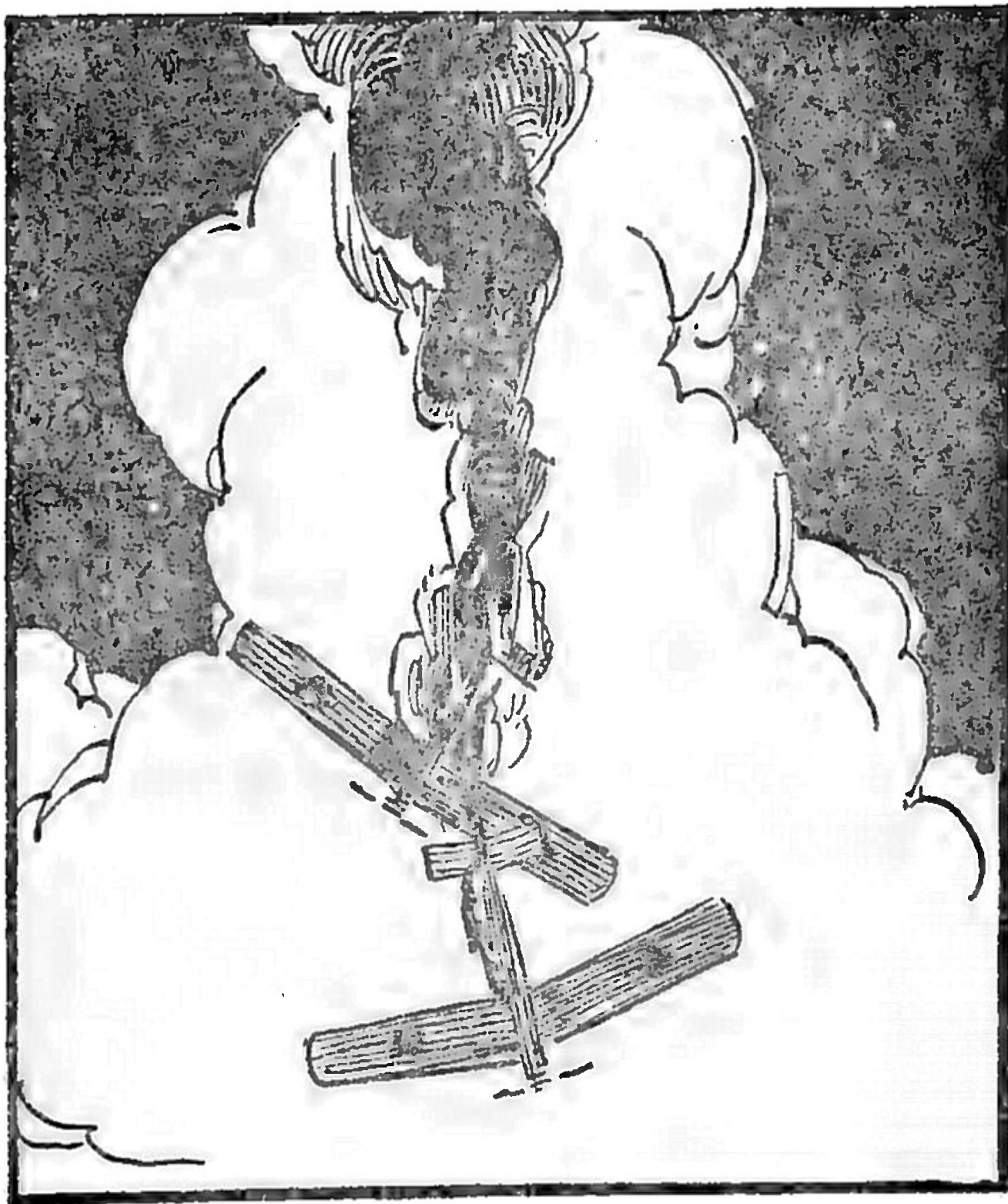


Mac Watched the Battle in the Air

guns spitting certain death!

Straight toward each other the two planes roared. When it seemed that a crash was inevitable the Japanese plane zoomed upward—but an instant too late. The prop of the Chinese ship sliced into its tail!

The two ships spun crazily. Their wings were ripped off as if by some giant hand, and locked in an embrace of death, the planes plum-



Locked in an Embrace of Death

meted toward the ground.

Mac was out of his hole and running before the planes hit a hundred yards away. Even as they fell a spiral of smoke marked their plunge.

The planes hit in a soft rice paddy with a sickening thud. The silent motors buried themselves in the black mud. Eager flames began licking at the crumbled fusilages. In the cockpits of their respective



He Raced Toward the Flaming Ships

planes the stunned pilots hung senseless on their belts.

Mac reached the Chinese pilot first, unbuckled his harness and dragged him out of reach of the spreading flames. By the time he got back, both ships were afire. He burned his hand as he unbuckled the unconscious Jap but he got him out. He staggered through the mucky ground with the Jap over his shoulder. He was less than



Mac Dragged the Pilot From the Flames

thirty feet from the planes when the fuel tank of the Chinese ship let go and hurled him forward on his face.

Wiping the mud out of his eyes, but otherwise unhurt, Mac again picked up the Jap and carried him over to the spot where he had dropped the slight form of the Chinese airman.

He placed the Jap beside his enemy and bent to examine the two

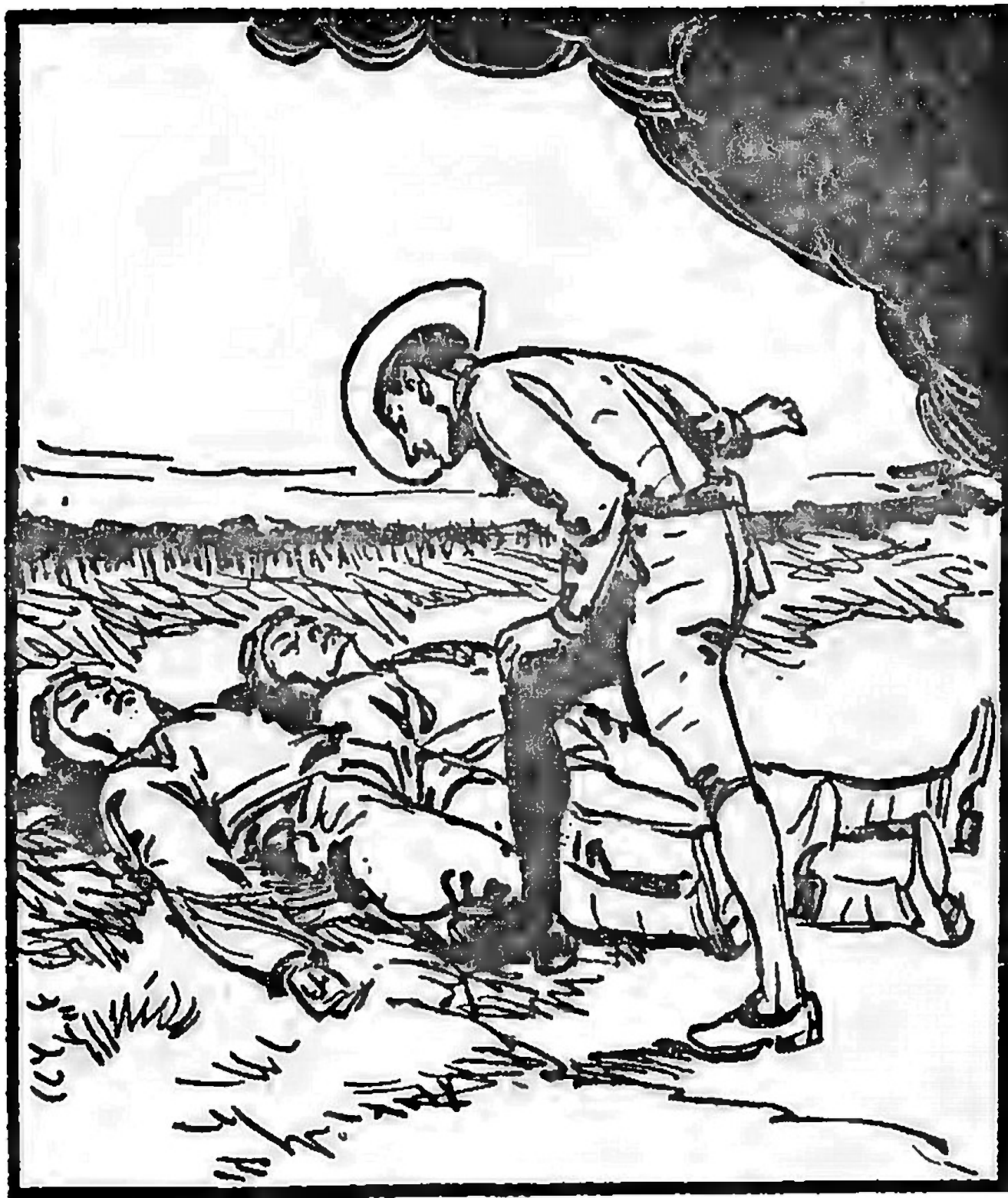


He Carried the Unconscious Pilot

48 MAC OF THE MARINES

unconscious Oriental pilots.

“Just as I thought,” Mac of the Marines commented, “a couple of kids!”



"Just a Couple of Kids!"

CHAPTER III

UNDECLARED PEACE

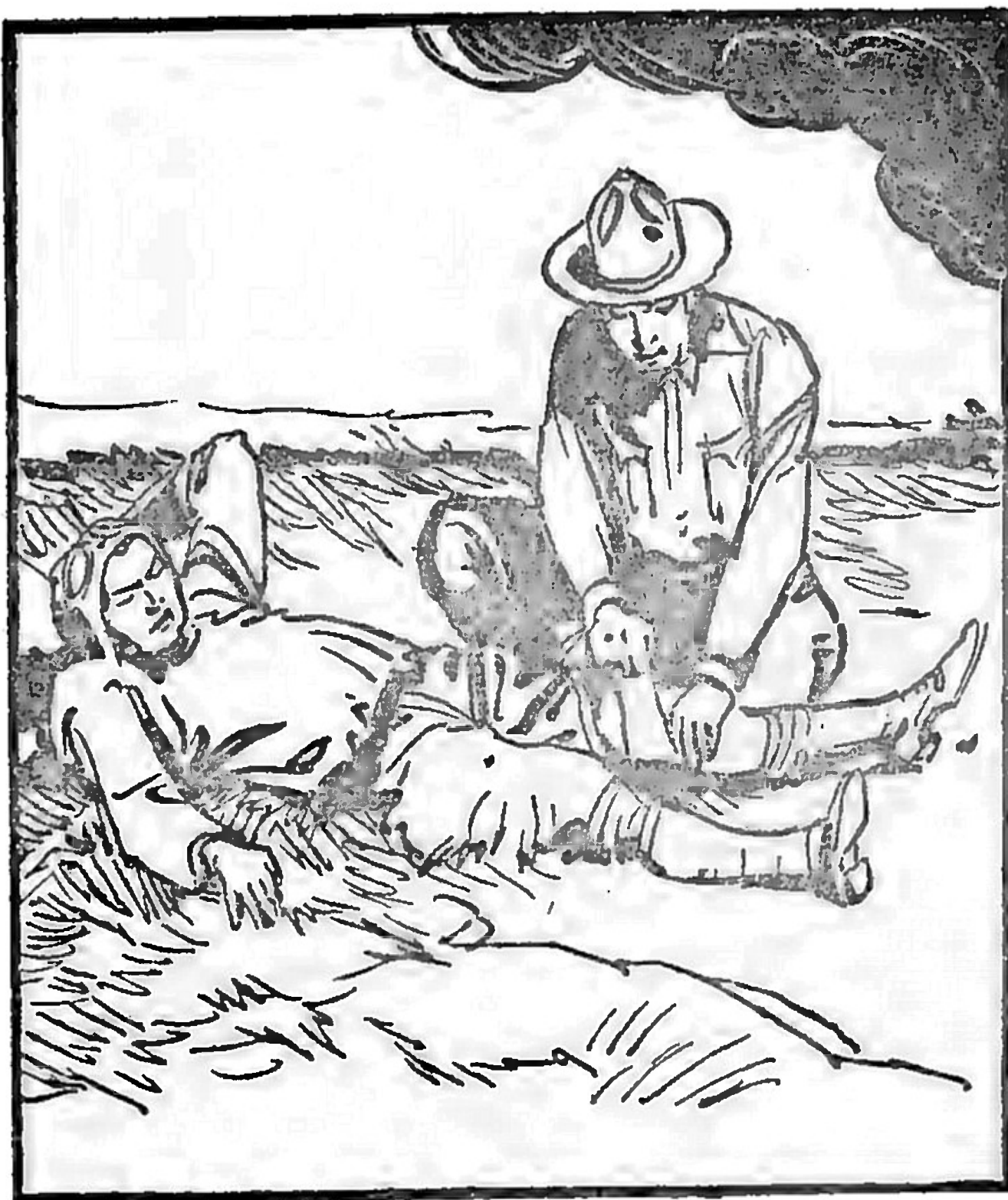
Mac saw quickly that by some miracle neither pilot was seriously wounded. They were stunned and badly shaken up. The Chinese flyer had a flesh wound in the shoulder and the Jap had been creased in the leg.



The Pilot Was Not Seriously Wounded

Mac ran back to his motorcycle and fished out an emergency first-aid kit. Luckily the kit was in a waterproof box. He set about bandaging the wounded men with professional skill and without regard of the fact that a few minutes before one of them had tried to fill him full of lead.

The only revenge Mac took on the Jap—if it could be called that—was a feeling of satisfaction as



Mac Bandaged the Wounded Leg

he flung a bucket of water on him to bring him back to consciousness. It was water from the same ditch into which Mac had been forced to jump a short time before.

The Jap blinked, opened his eyes and stirred.

While Mac of the Marines turned and repeated the process on the Chinese airman, the young Japanese sat up, felt himself all over and seemed surprised to find him-



He Flung a Bucket of Water on Him

self alive and in one piece.

The Chinese pilot reacted in exactly the same way.

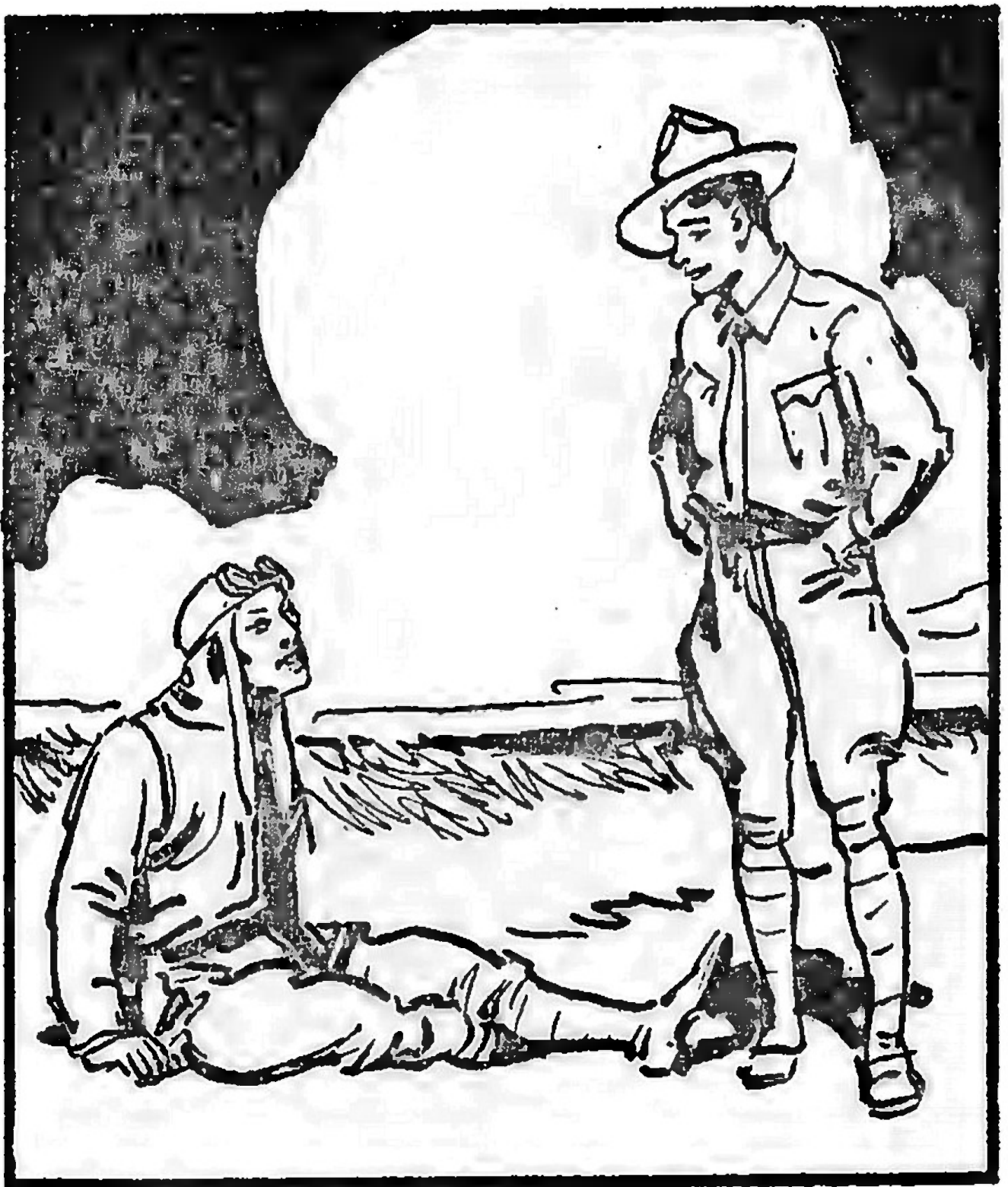
The Jap pilot was the first to speak.

"You are an American!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes," Mac replied. "I was the fellow you chased in the ditch."

The Jap breathed a sigh of relief.

"A thousand pardons. I see I did not hit you. I am thankful and



The Jap Was the First to Speak

I am grateful to you for saving the life of one who would have taken yours but for bad shooting.”

“You’re both just about the worst machine gunners I’ve ever seen, thank heaven,” Mac replied and turned to the Chinese pilot. “How do you feel?”

The Chinese struggled somewhat dizzily to his feet and held out his hand.

“Thank you, very well. Might I



The Pilot Held out His Hand

learn the name of the man to whom I owe my life," he said in as faultless English as the Japanese pilot had spoken a moment before.

"Think nothing of it. Fair exchange is no robbery. If you hadn't happened along our Jap friend here would have finished me off in short order. My name is Sergeant MacLain of the U. S. Marines."

As Mac indicated the Japanese



"Our Friend Here Would Have Finished Me."

pilot the young Chinaman seemed to notice for the first time that they were not alone. He stiffened and his hand automatically went to his revolver holster.

But his gun was not there.

Mac's face took on a hardened look.

"Now listen to me, you two," he snapped. "I went to a lot of trouble saving your lives and I took the precaution to disarm both of you.



"Now Listen to Me!" Mac Snapped

You've both done enough fighting to last you a while, so cut it out—and besides you've never seen each other before. You've never done each other dirt. Just because your respective governments happen to be settling an argument the hard way is no reason for you to hate each other and act like a couple of bantam roosters!"

The two pilots looked at Mac in surprise.



“You’ve Both Done Enough Fighting.”

Mac looked surprised himself and took a deep breath.

“Relax, you two. That’s the longest speech I’ve made in ten years and I don’t want it wasted.”

“I am sure,” the Chinese pilot replied and smiled, “that the honorable pilot from Japan and I can bury the hatchet, as you Americans say.”

“And how,” the Jap replied and held out his hand.



The Enemies Shook Hands

“Say,” Mac cut in, “you fellows talk like a couple of Yanks!”

“I studied at Harvard,” the Chinese pilot answered. “My name is Lio-Chang. In America everybody called me Chang.”

“My name is Yoshohami Sito,” the Jap said and accepted Chang’s hand. “But since Yoshohami was difficult to pronounce I was known as ‘Sito’ at Yale.”

“Well, I’ll be hanged,” Mac



They Were Both College Graduates

snorted. "Yale and Harvard. If we had twenty more of you fellows we could have a swell football game."



"Well, I'll Be Hanged!"

CHAPTER IV

THE AIR RAID

Even as Mac spoke, his sharp eyes caught sight of a car coming toward them along the muddy road.

“If this is a military car I’m afraid you’ll have to be Chang’s prisoner since this is his country,”



A Car Was Coming Toward Them

Mac said quickly to Sito.

“I shall be honored,” Sito replied and bowed.

“As a prisoner you will be safe and well treated,” Chang said apologetically. “I might allow you to escape but you would only be caught and perhaps murdered by the peasants. They have suffered much and do not understand that we soldiers do only what we are told to do.”



The Jap Promised the Chinese Protection

Mac, keeping an eye on the approaching car, was about to return Chang's gun when he saw that the oncoming vehicle was an ambulance carrying a Red Cross flag. The ambulance pulled into the farmhouse yard, and the driver jumped out and hurried toward them.

"Here's a couple of customers for you, fella," Mac called.

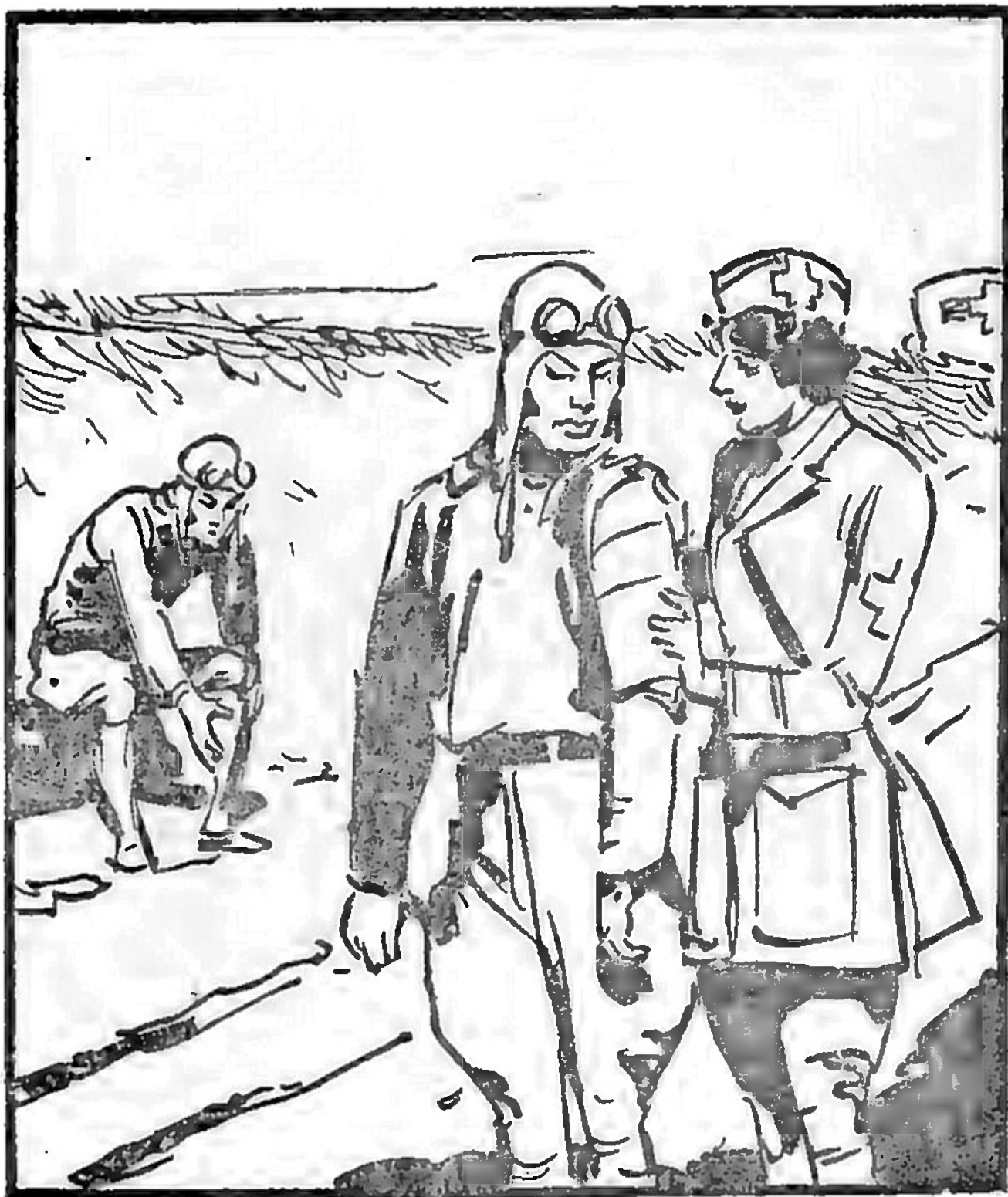
But he broke off suddenly, for



The Driver Hurried Toward Them

the driver of the ambulance was not a man but an attractive, dark-haired young woman dressed in an ambulance driver's uniform.

“I saw the planes fall from the village and hurried out here,” the girl explained as she quickly examined Chang and Sito's bandages. “Doesn't look like there's much for me to do except drive you to the hospital,” she added and then turned to Mac. “I'm Ann Kelly at-



She Examined Sito's Bandage

tached to the American Red Cross Unit at Shotang.”

Mac nodded, introduced Chang and Sito, gave his name and regiment and added, “This is old home week, Miss Kelly. Chang is from Harvard and Sito from Yale. You didn’t go to Princeton, did you?”

Ann Kelly stiffened and glared at Mac.

“No,” she shot back, “but I did go to Vassar.”



"This Is Old Home Week."

“Vassar College,” Sito exclaimed. “My sister attended that college.”

“Sito,” Ann Kelly repeated. “I knew a Miss Sito. Why, we . . .”

“Listen,” Mac broke in. “Everything in its time and place—and this is no place for reminiscences. I have a motorcycle in a mudhole down the road and if it isn’t too full of Sito’s machine-gun bullets I’d like to get it out and ride on to



Mac Interrupted Their Conversation

Shanghai with some consular dispatches that should have been there hours ago.”

“Of course. I’m sorry, Sergeant MacLain,” Miss Kelly replied icily.

“We will go help Sergeant Mac get his motorcycle,” Chang offered.

“You will not,” Miss Kelly objected. “You’ve both lost quite a bit of blood from those wounds. Get in the ambulance and lie down. I’ll put a rope on the Sergeant’s



“Get in the Ambulance and Lie Down.”

velocipede and pull it out for him.”

Mac looked steadily at the nurse for a moment. Then he laughed.

“You win, Miss Kelly. I guess I was a bit rude, but finding these two youngsters trying to kill each other when they ought to be going to school, and then you coming along doing a man’s job sort of got my goat.”

“I understand,” Ann Kelly replied and laughed in turn. “I for-



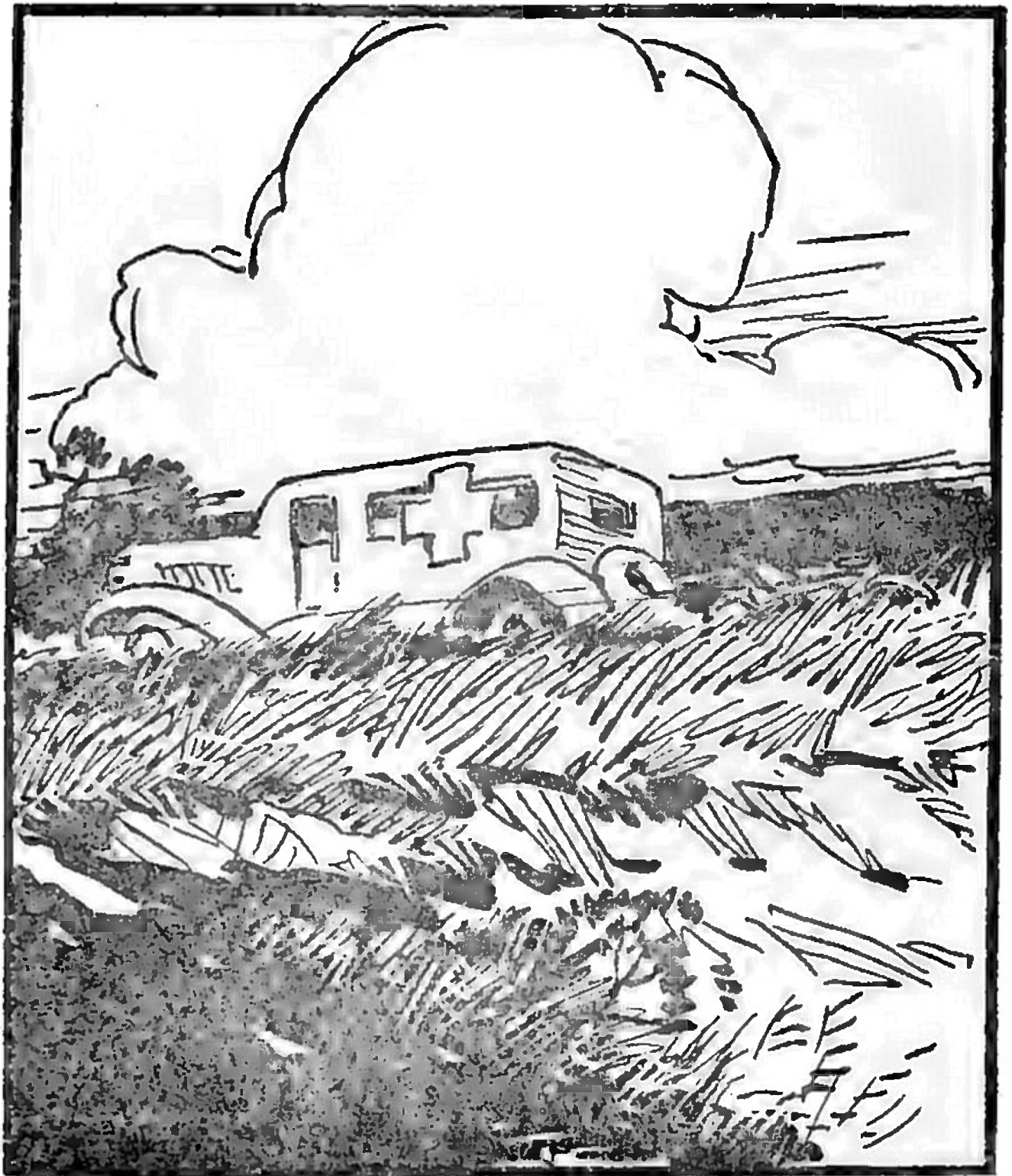
Ann Kelly Offered to Help Him

give you and to prove it I'll tow your machine out of the hole and give you a lift to Shotang."

A few minutes later they were on the road to Shotang with Mac's machine bumping along behind.

It was nearly dark when they approached the Red Cross Headquarters.

But they were not destined to reach those headquarters. At that moment Mac's keen ears again

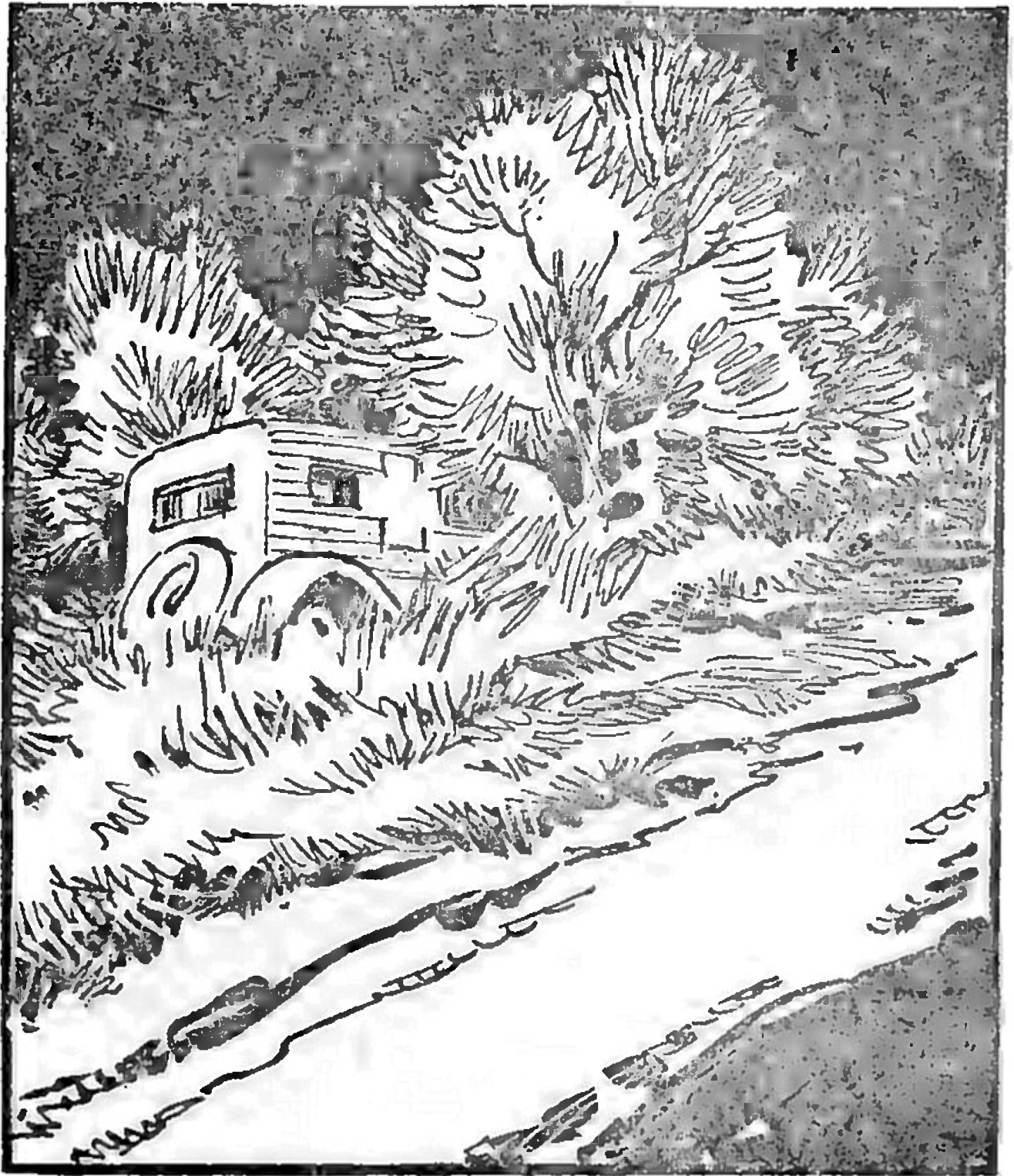


On the Road to Shotang

picked up the hum of airplane motors above the sound of the ambulance engine. This time it was not one but many motors. Mac looked and saw a squadron of bombers roaring out of the east.

“Turn off the road!” he cried to Ann Kelly and pointed.

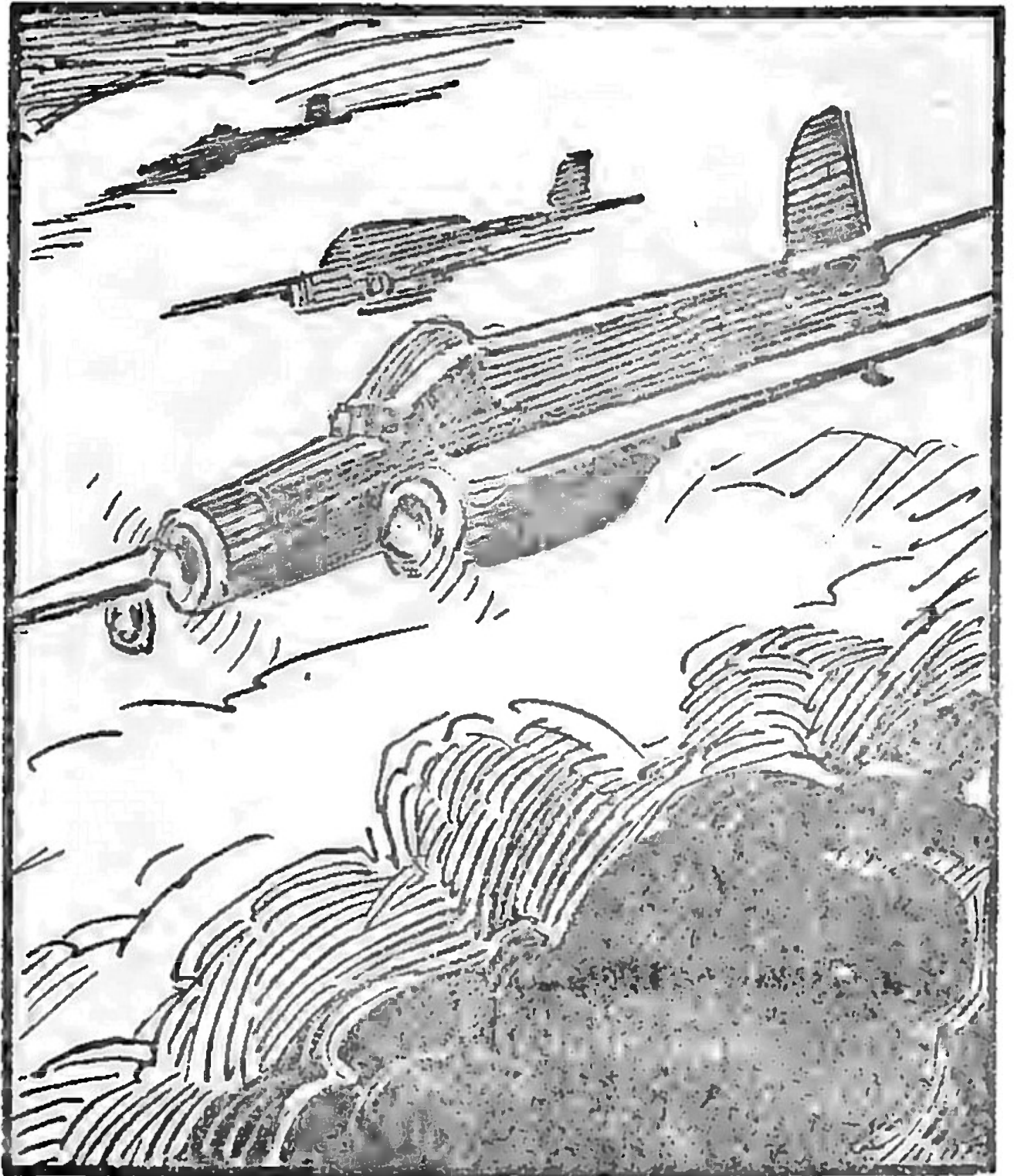
The words were barely out of his mouth before the first bombs hit. This time they were more fortunate than Mac had been in a choice



They Swung off the Road Abruptly

of shelter. Ann swung the ambulance into a small grove of willow trees and they helplessly watched the bombers systematically wipe out the village of Shotang.

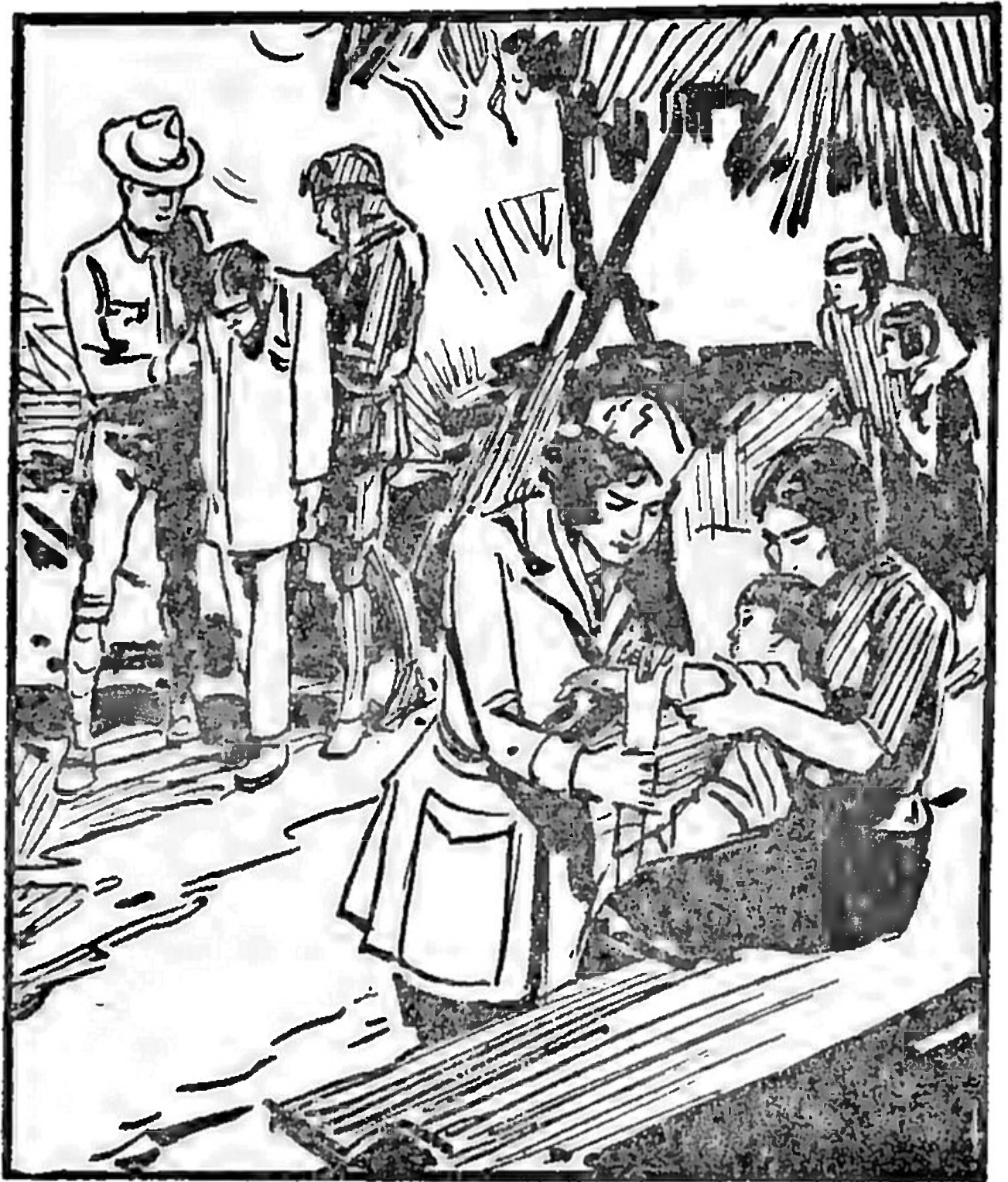
As darkness came on the bombers flew back toward Shanghai, their bomb racks empty. Behind them they left the smoking, flaming ruins of what had once been the peaceful village of Shotang. Being off the main road and of no



The Bombers Flew Back Toward Shanghai

military importance, there were no Chinese troops. So all through the night Mac, Ann Kelly, Chang and Sito did what they could for the stricken survivors. The Red Cross Unit had been wiped out, and when dawn came Ann sorrowfully agreed to give up the search for her fellow workers and drive to Shanghai.

Mac took the wheel, and they proceeded slowly along narrow,



They Helped the Stricken Survivors

crooked roads crowded with troops and refugees.

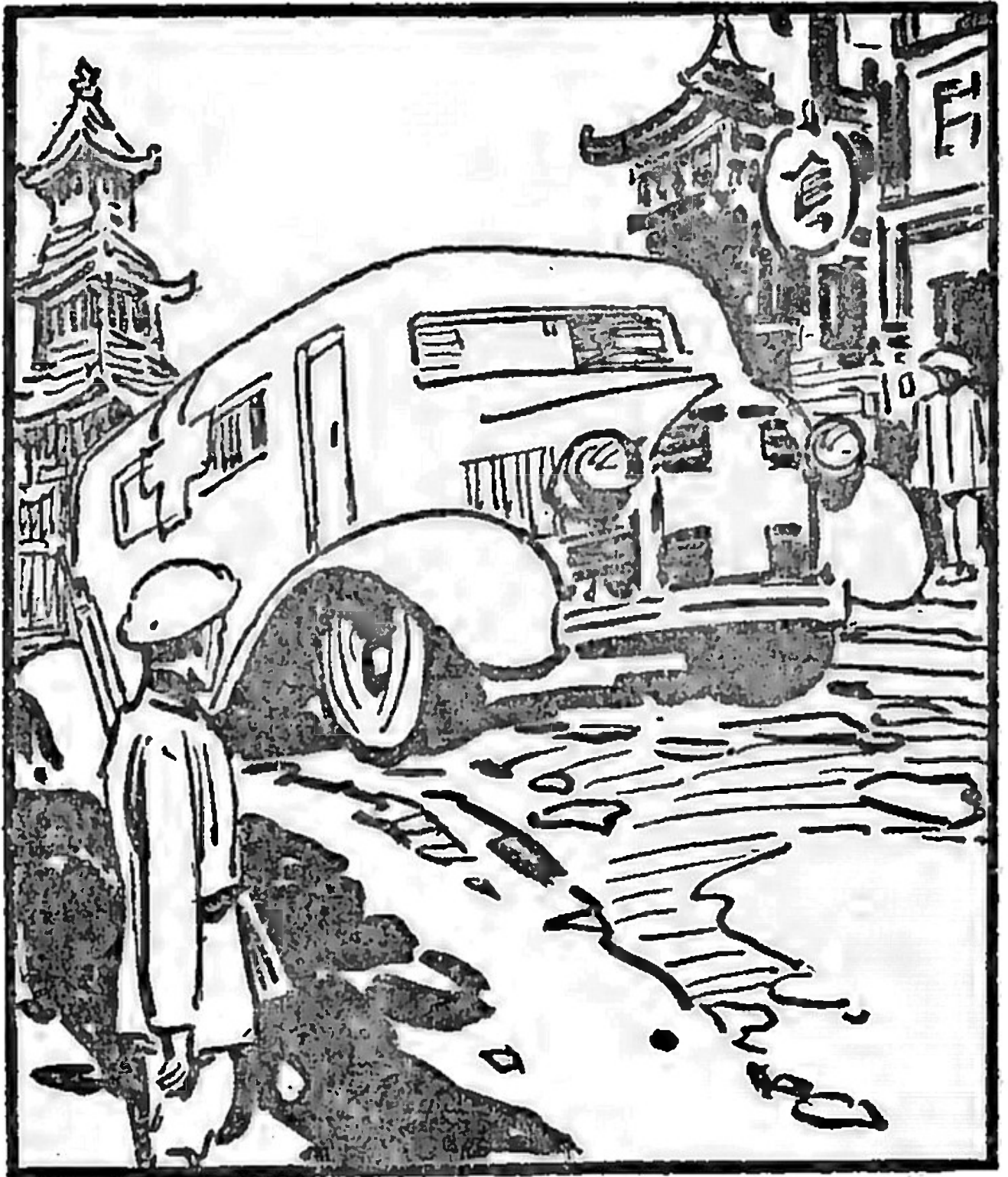
In the ambulance, Chang and Sito lay on stretchers and talked. In spite of their wounds they had worked side by side among the victims of Shotang. Now they were exhausted, not from fighting each other but working together. They did not talk much. It was no longer necessary, for a strange but strong friendship had sprung



Chang and Sito Lay on Stretchers

up between these two would-be enemies.

Late that same night the ambulance bumped and rolled into the International Settlement of Shanghai.

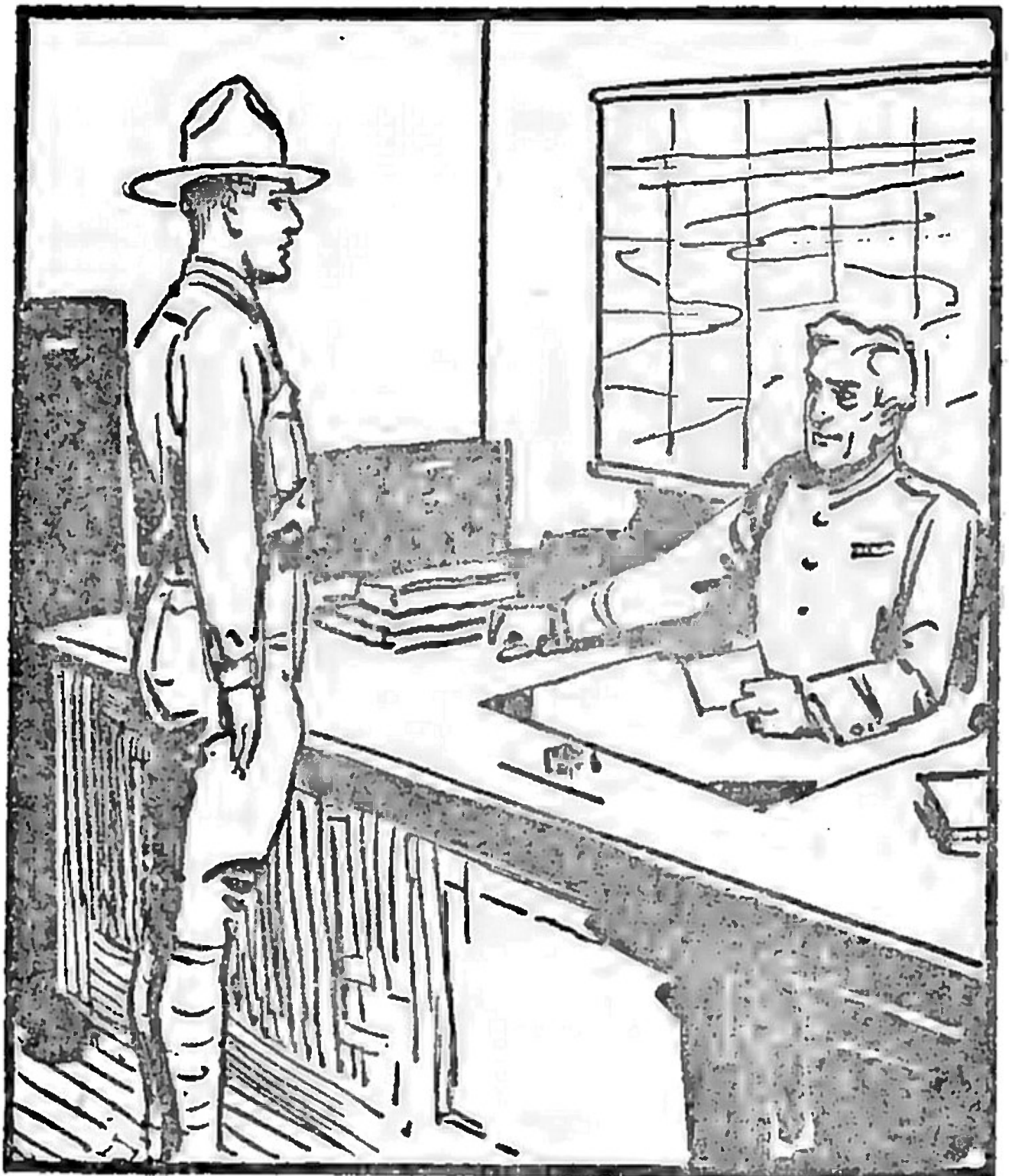


The Ambulance Rolled into Shanghai

CHAPTER V

BACK TO HEADQUARTERS

Once inside the barbed wire entanglements of the International Settlement, Mac drove directly to Marine headquarters and delivered his dispatches. The officer of the day glanced at his mud-stained uniform and smiled.



Mac Delivered His Dispatches

“Looks like you had a rough trip,” he commented.

“Ran into a little trouble on the way,” Mac replied laconically.

“Better take a few hours to get cleaned up and rested, Sergeant,” the officer replied and turned to a study of the dispatches. “Report back in three hours. I believe there’s another assignment the Commander will want you to undertake.”



"Report Back in Three Hours."

Mac saluted and returned to the ambulance.

“I’ll drive you to the hospital.”

Ann Kelly was about to protest, but he gave her no chance. She was a plucky girl, but the long night in the ruined village and the tedious drive to Shanghai had brought her to a point of utter exhaustion. As Mac steered the ambulance through the crowded streets the girl leaned against his



Ann Fell Asleep

shoulder and fell asleep.

At the hospital Chang and Sito were transferred to the wards. As they were carried away Mac shook hands with both.

"I hope," he said, "that I don't run into either one of you in this man's war again, but I suppose you'll both be flying again in a couple of days."

"Thank you, Sergeant MacLain," Chang replied warmly. "I



The Pilot Was Transferred to the Wards

must go back to my squadron as soon as I am well and because my new friend Sito is no longer my prisoner, since you brought us into the International Settlement, he will have to return to his detachment."

Sito nodded and likewise shook hands.

"We will not soon forget you, Sergeant MacLain."

"You have made us look on this



Mac Said Good-Bye to the Pilot

war in a different light," Chang added.

"After seeing the havoc and death which our bombers brought to the village of Shotang last night I too look upon the war through different eyes," Sito agreed.

"Too bad you're both not generals," Mac replied gruffly, "but since you're not, and you've got to go on fighting, there's no law against missing your targets as



The Village Was Wiped Out

wide as you did yesterday.”

Mac shook his head grimly as he watched the two youngsters being carried into the hospital. Then he turned to Ann Kelly and shook her gently.

“All right, Miss Kelly,” he said gruffly. “Wake up and tell me where you want to go. I’ll take you there—then I have to get back to headquarters.”

The nurse gave him directions



He Watched the Youngsters Carried Away

and a few minutes later they were shaking hands outside the headquarters of the American Red Cross.

“We’ll meet again,” Ann said.

“I don’t know,” Mac replied.

“This is getting to be a right sizable war.”

As Mac strode off down the street, Ann Kelly watched him go and a smile played on her lips.

“Sergeant Mac,” she said aloud,



Mac Shook Her Gently

“you pretend to be hard-boiled but you don’t fool me for a minute.”

Turning away, she too went into headquarters for another dangerous assignment.



"You Don't Fool Me for a Minute."

CHAPTER VI

ASSIGNED ANEW

Back at the Marine Barracks, Mac shaved and changed his muddy uniform before reporting to headquarters. As he entered the staff office an orderly saluted him.

“Major Stanhope wants to see you right away, Sergeant,” he said.



Mac Got Ready to Report to Headquarters

Mac entered the Major's office and found him bent over a map of Central China.

"At ease, Sergeant," the Major called. "I'll be with you in a moment. I hear you had a tough time getting through from Saung with the dispatches?"

"Yes, sir," Mac replied and waited.

A moment later the Major looked up from his maps and eyed Mac.



Mac Entered the Major's Office

“I’m sending you back to Saung, Sergeant.”

“Yes, sir,” Mac replied and struggled to suppress a grin.

“Anything funny about that?” the Major asked sharply.

“No, sir. I was only thinking that I wouldn’t have bothered to get out of my muddy uniform if I’d known that.”

The Major relaxed and chuckled.

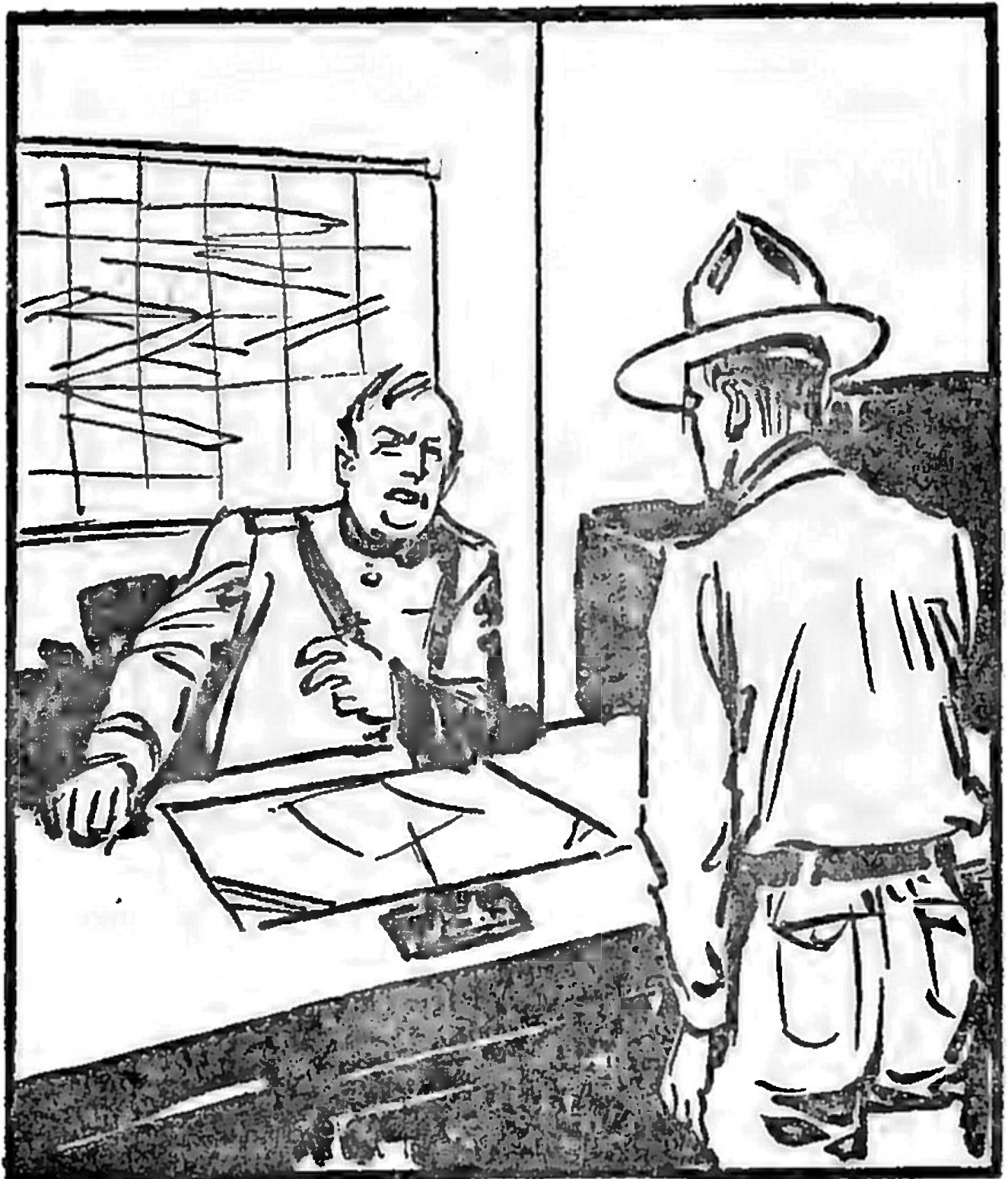
“You’re not going back by road,



Mac Tried to Suppress a Grin

Sergeant. Conditions have changed since you left Saung. We've had a wireless message from the United States Consul there and he's convinced that all Americans along the Liho River must be evacuated. Roving bands of looters are beginning to be troublesome, and the local Chinese authorities are powerless to stop them."

Sergeant Mac nodded. He had known of this condition before he



The Major Gave Him a New Assignment

left Saung. He had warned the consul of the danger, but his advice had been ignored.

“I want you to take a picked squad of men from your platoon and go up the river. An American gunboat of the Yangtze Patrol is waiting at the Bund. You and your men will board her and proceed to Saung. You’ll be in charge of the evacuation and will use your own discretion and act as you think



"You Will Be in Charge."

best if any emergencies should arise."

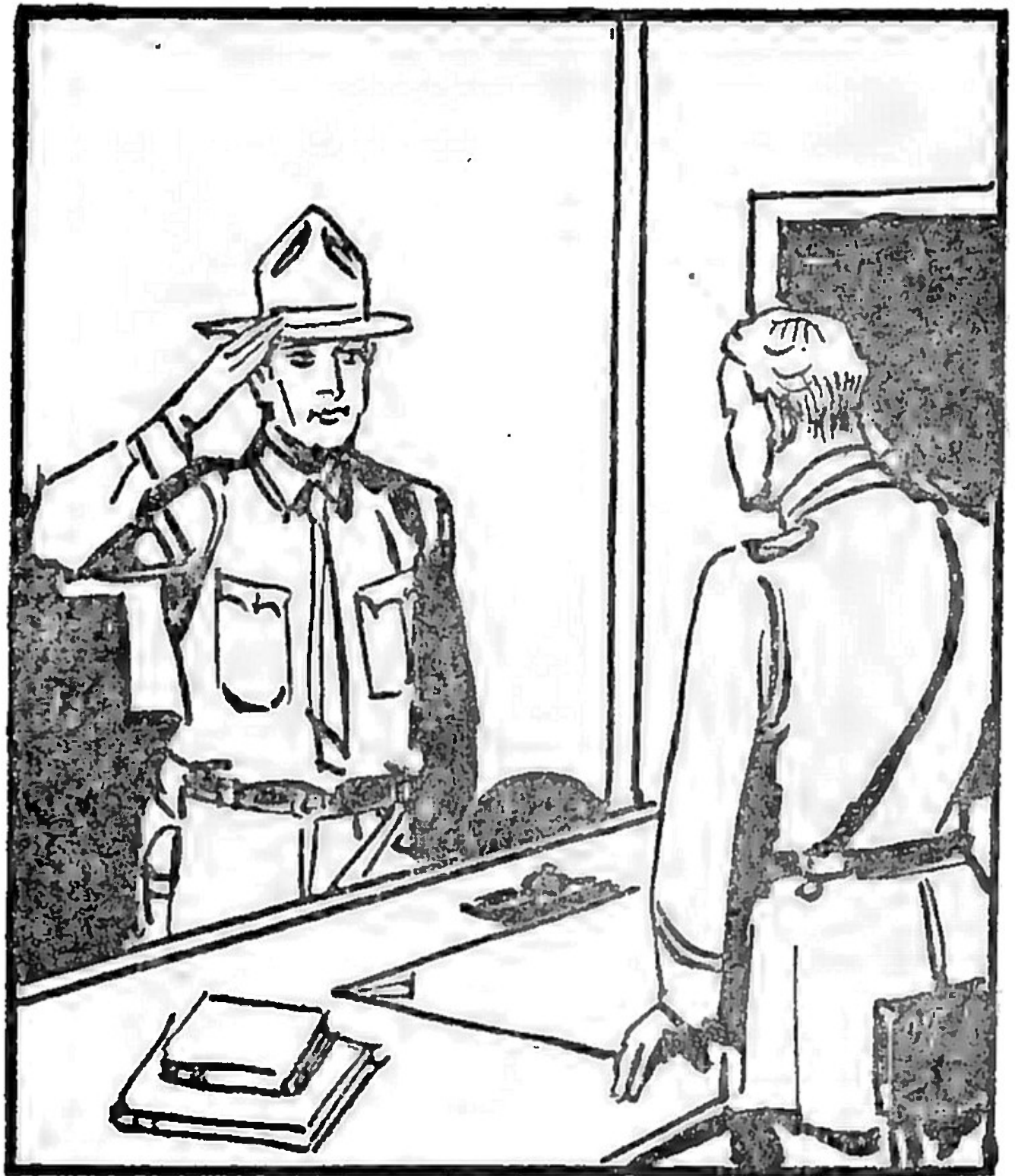
The Major stood up.

"That is all, Sergeant! Good luck!"

Mac saluted and hurried to the barracks where his men had gathered after the noonday mess.

"I need," Mac announced, "a volunteer detail of eight men!"

To a man, the members of Mac's platoon stepped forward.



Mac Saluted and Left

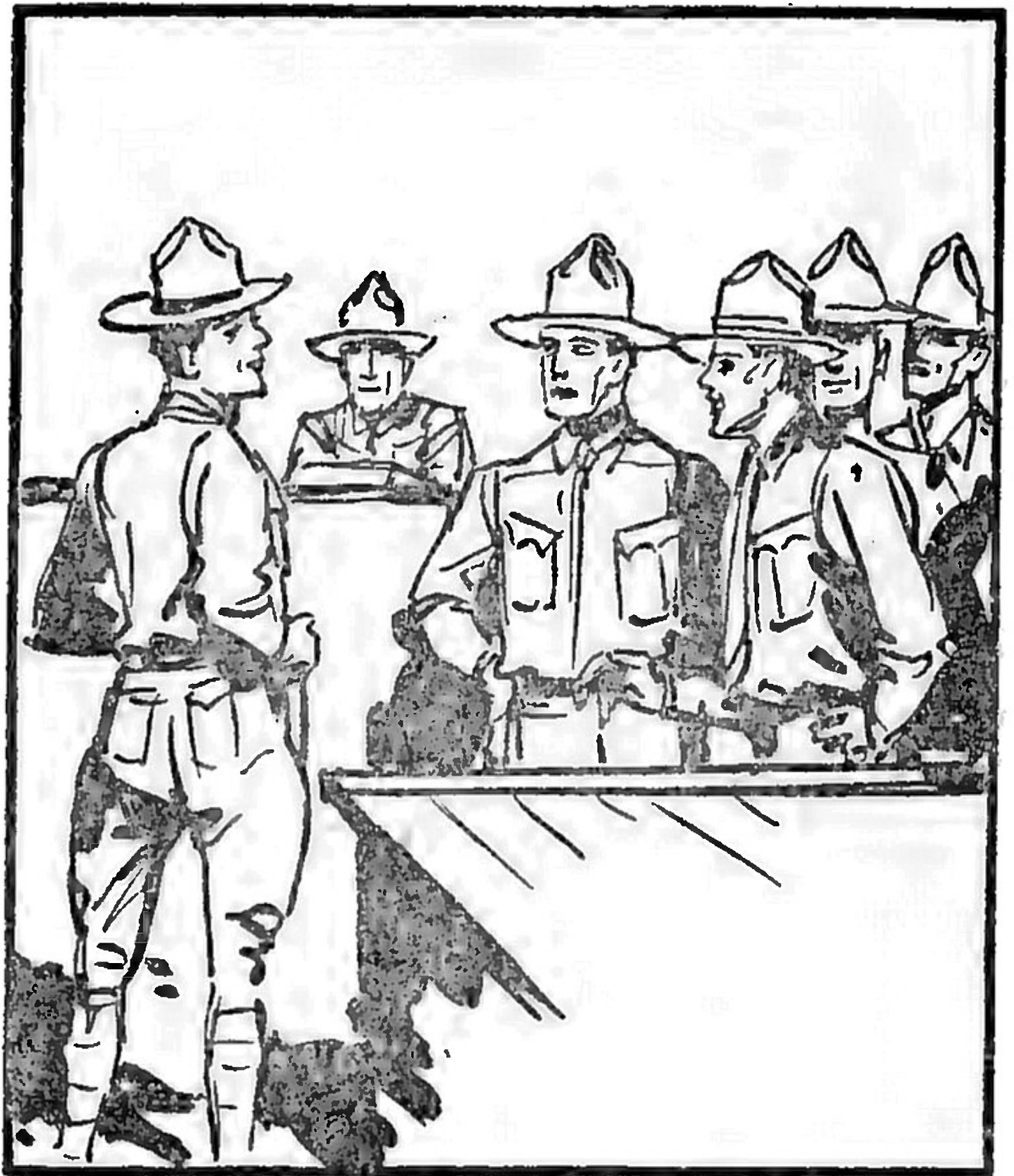
“Sorry, men.” Mac grinned proudly. “But I can take only eight and I can tell you now it’s liable to be tough going.”

No men fell out of line so Mac turned to his corporal of the first squad.

“All your men here, Shorty?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” Shorty replied proudly.

“All right, equip your squad with



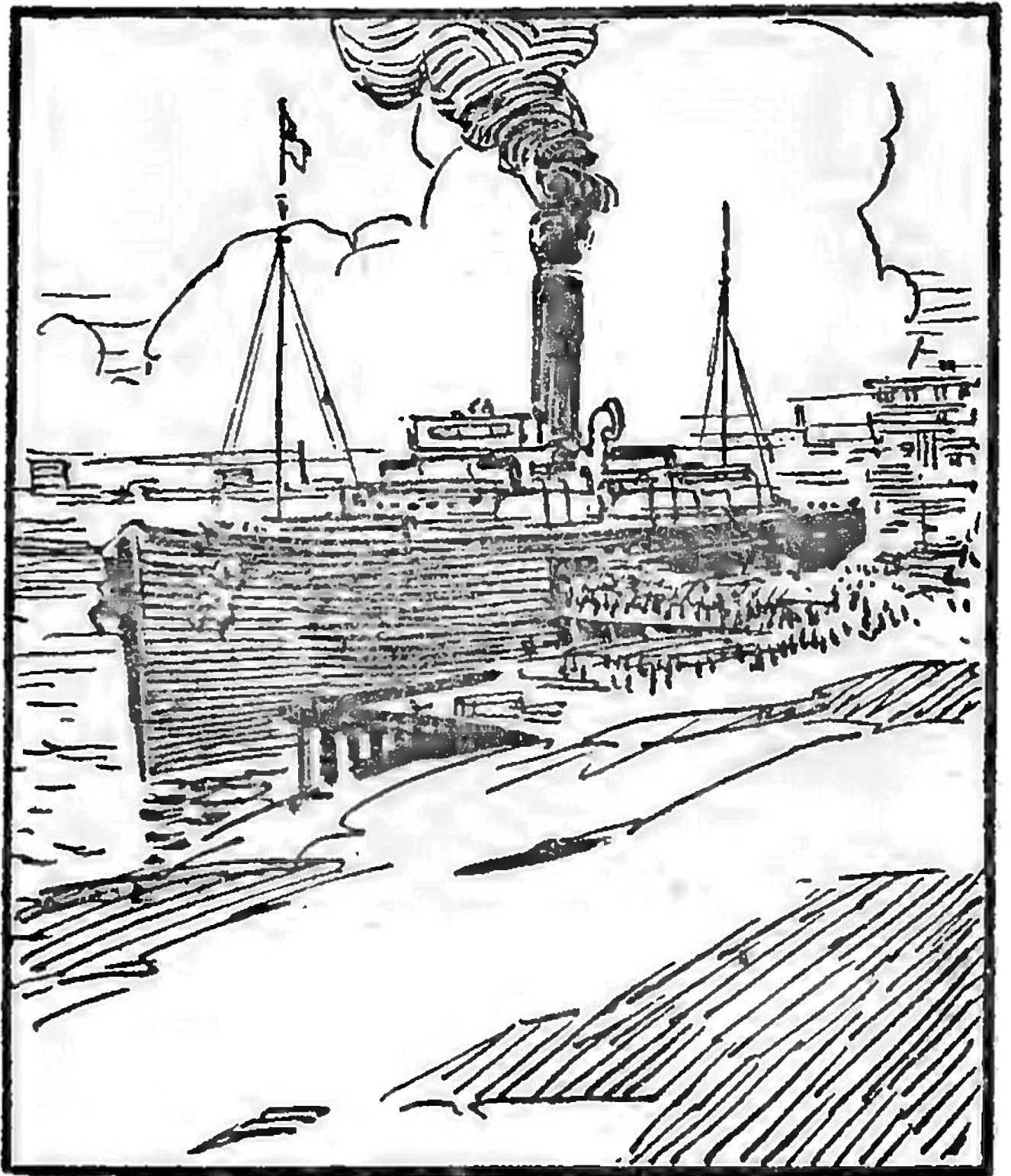
Every Man Volunteered

automatic rifles, one machine gun and plenty of ammunition. We're boarding a gunboat and going up river to bring back a flock of refugees from Saung."

Shorty saluted and barked out orders to his squad.

Ten minutes later Mac marched his detail to the Shanghai Bund, where the American Gunboat waited with steam up.

The Naval Lieutenant Harris in



They Boarded a Gunboat

command of the gunboat, ordered the lines cast off as soon as Mac and his marines were aboard. But as the gangplank was being hauled in, a 'rickshaw rolled up with a coolie running on the double. A girl in the uniform of a Red Cross nurse called to Lieutenant Harris and Mac whirled at the sound of her voice.

It was Ann Kelly!

"Well, I'll be" Mac growled,



Ann Kelly Called to Mac

not altogether disappointed at sight of her.

“Hello, Sergeant MacLain,” Ann called when she saw him. “Fancy seeing you here. I told you we’d meet again.”

As she spoke to Mac she handed the Naval Lieutenant a sealed envelope.

“We’re going up river to Saung and this is no picnic,” Mac objected.



She Handed the Lieutenant an Envelope

“It’s all right, Sergeant,” the Lieutenant interposed. “It seems the wife of the American Consul at Saung is ill and needs a nurse to accompany her on the trip down to Shanghai. Miss Kelly has been assigned.”

Ann Kelly thanked the Lieutenant and smiled at Mac.

“You see, Mac,” she teased, “I’m very hard to get rid of.”

At this point Shorty Gage,



Ann Was Assigned to the Case

Mac's corporal, stepped forward and offered to take Ann's combination bag and medical kit.

"We'll try to make you comfortable," the Lieutenant said quickly. "I'll show you to a cabin."

As Ann Kelly followed Lieutenant Harris, Shorty winked at Mac and went off with her bag.

"Been holding out on us, eh, Sergeant?" he remarked as he passed Mac.

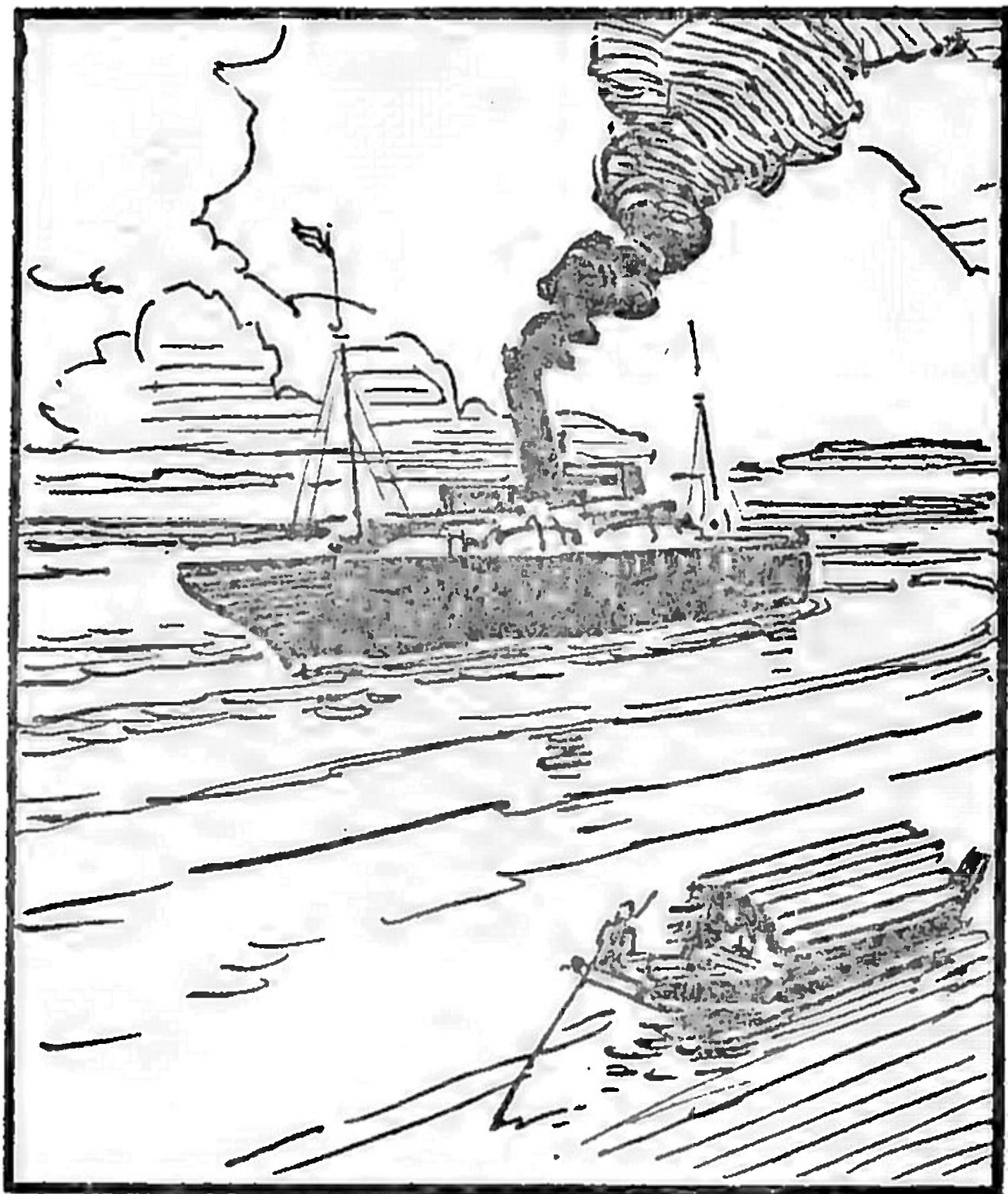


Ann Was Shown to Her Cabin

As for Mac, his eyes followed Ann as she walked along the deck of the gunboat.

Suddenly he grinned and remarked, "Thoroughbred and smart as a whip!"

By that time the little gunboat had swung out into the Whangpoo and was headed downstream to where the river joined the Yangtze at Whoosung. Over to the left, in Chapei, the rattle of gunfire could



The Gunboat Swung out into the Whangpoo

be heard. The Chinese and Japanese were still fighting for possession of that crowded section of Shanghai.

Going downstream they threaded their way through a dozen warships of as many nations. They passed under the stern of the "Augusta," flagship of the Far Eastern United States Squadron. Farther downstream they came to row after row of Japanese war-

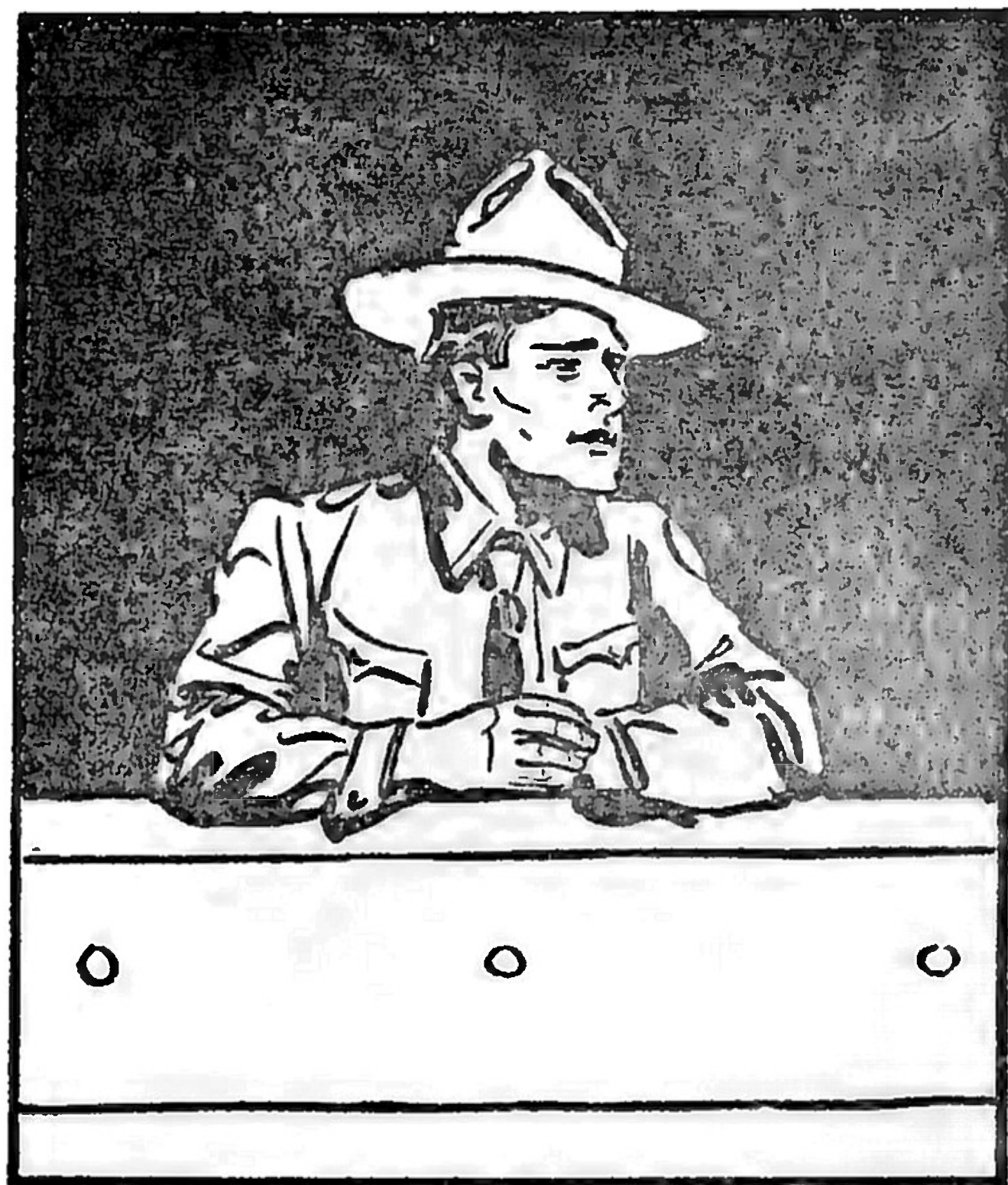


The River Was Filled With Warships

ships with their guns unlimbered and ready, and their anti-aircraft crews standing by for the first warning of an air attack by the Chinese planes.

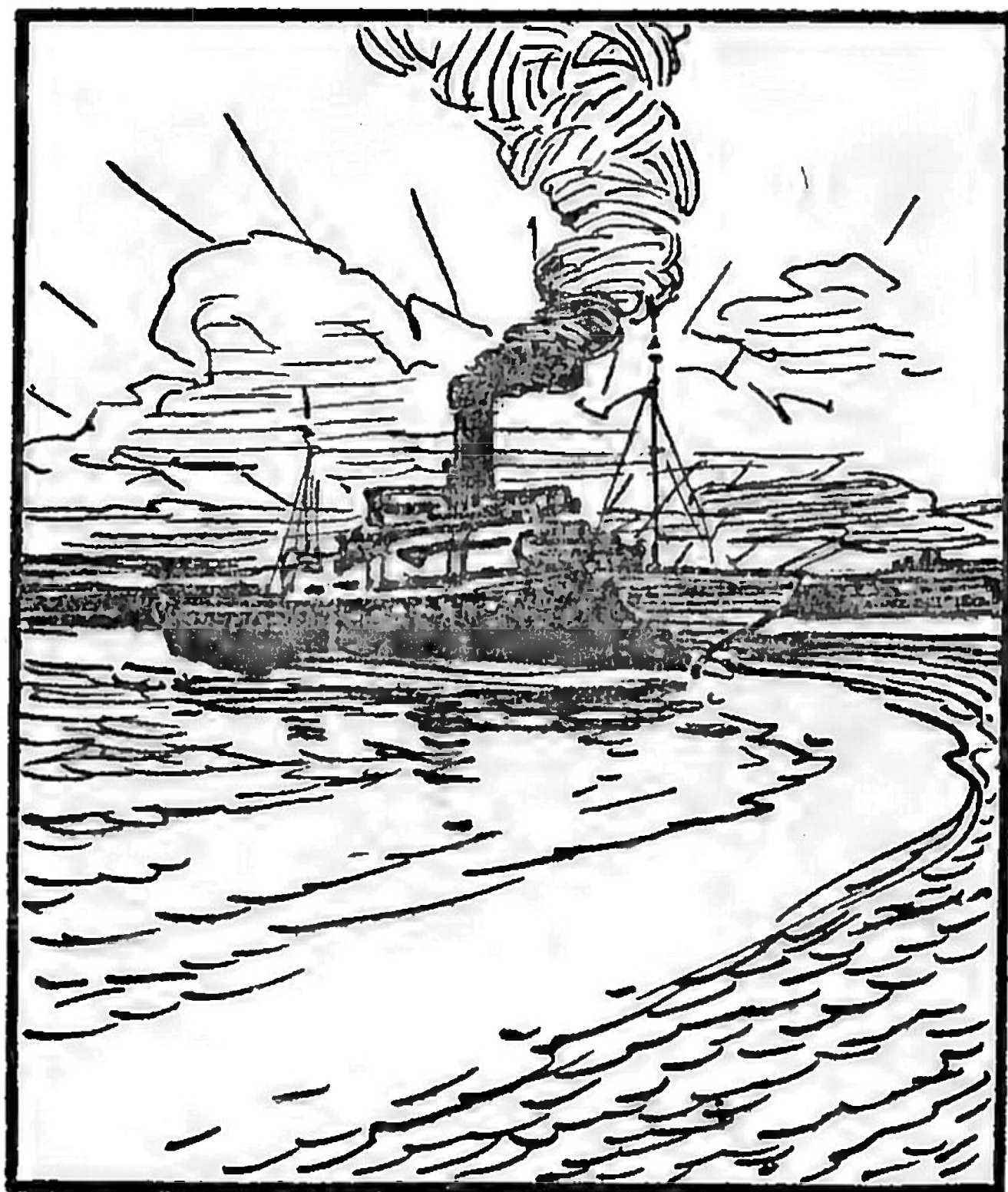
In the long line Mac saw Sito's ship and wondered if the young Jap had been transferred to the cruiser's sick bay.

It was just sundown when the gunboat reached the broad, muddy expanse of the lower Yangtze and



Mac Saw Sito's Ship

steered northwest toward its up-river junction with the Liho River. Saung was up there and trouble was brewing!



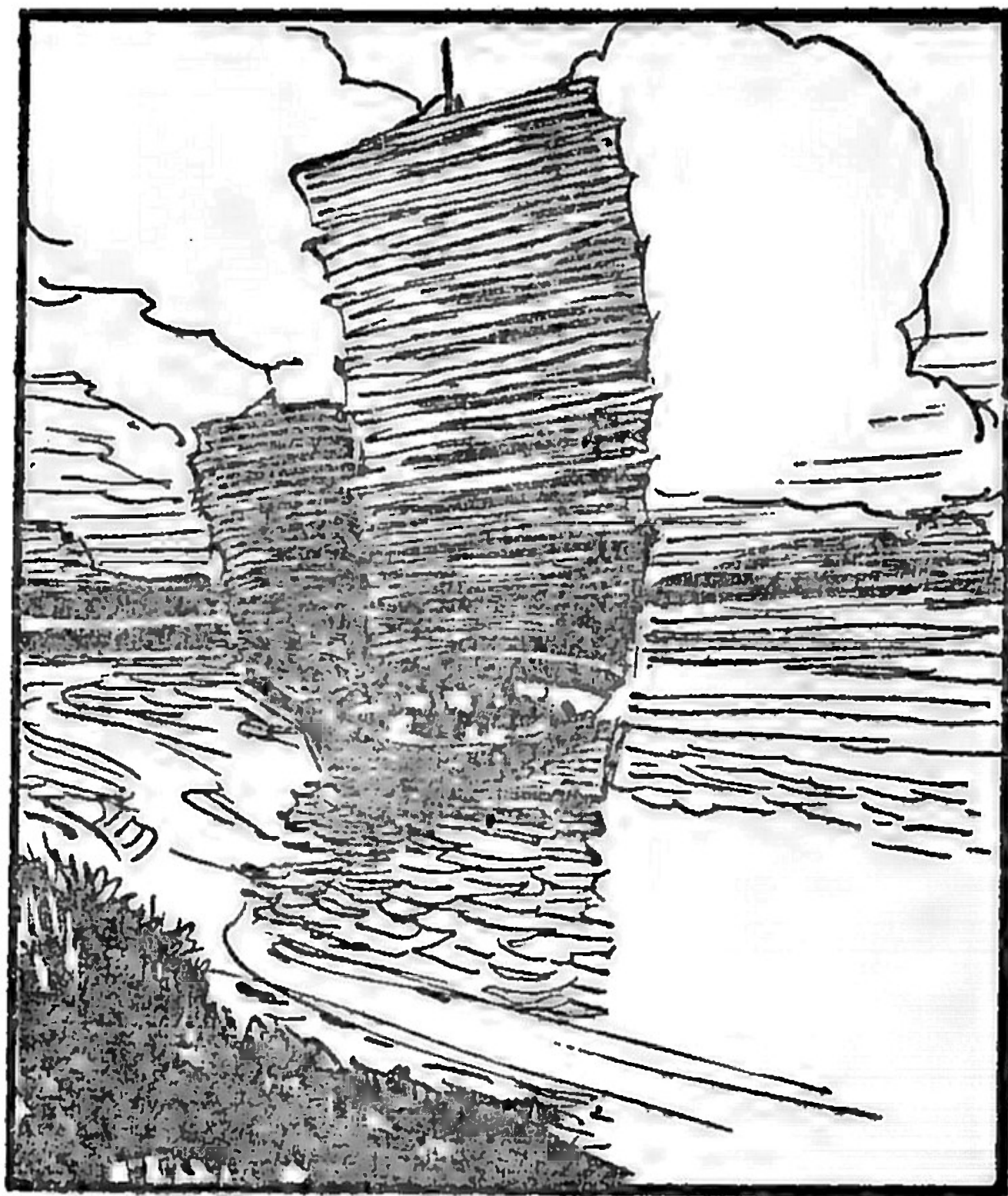
The Ship Headed Toward Saung

CHAPTER VII

BLOCKADE!

The gunboat moved steadily upstream. The river, normally crowded with countless junks, was deserted. Occasionally a shadowy junk slipped downstream, hugging the shore.

Mac joined Lieutenant Harris



Occasionally a Junk Slipped Downstream

and Miss Kelly in the dining salon for dinner. When they had finished, the Lieutenant asked to be excused.

“I strongly advise against going out on deck, Miss Kelly,” the Lieutenant warned as he left to go to the pilot house. “There are a lot of snipers all along the river and they seem to think any passing boat is a fair target.”

“Did you hear what happened to



The Lieutenant Warned Ann

Chang and Sito?" Mac asked as they finished their coffee.

"They've both been sent back to their squadrons. Their wounds weren't serious and they'll be flying again in a couple of days," Ann replied.

Occasionally, as they talked, the sharp bark of rifles and the staccato rattle of occasional machine-gun fire echoed in the night.

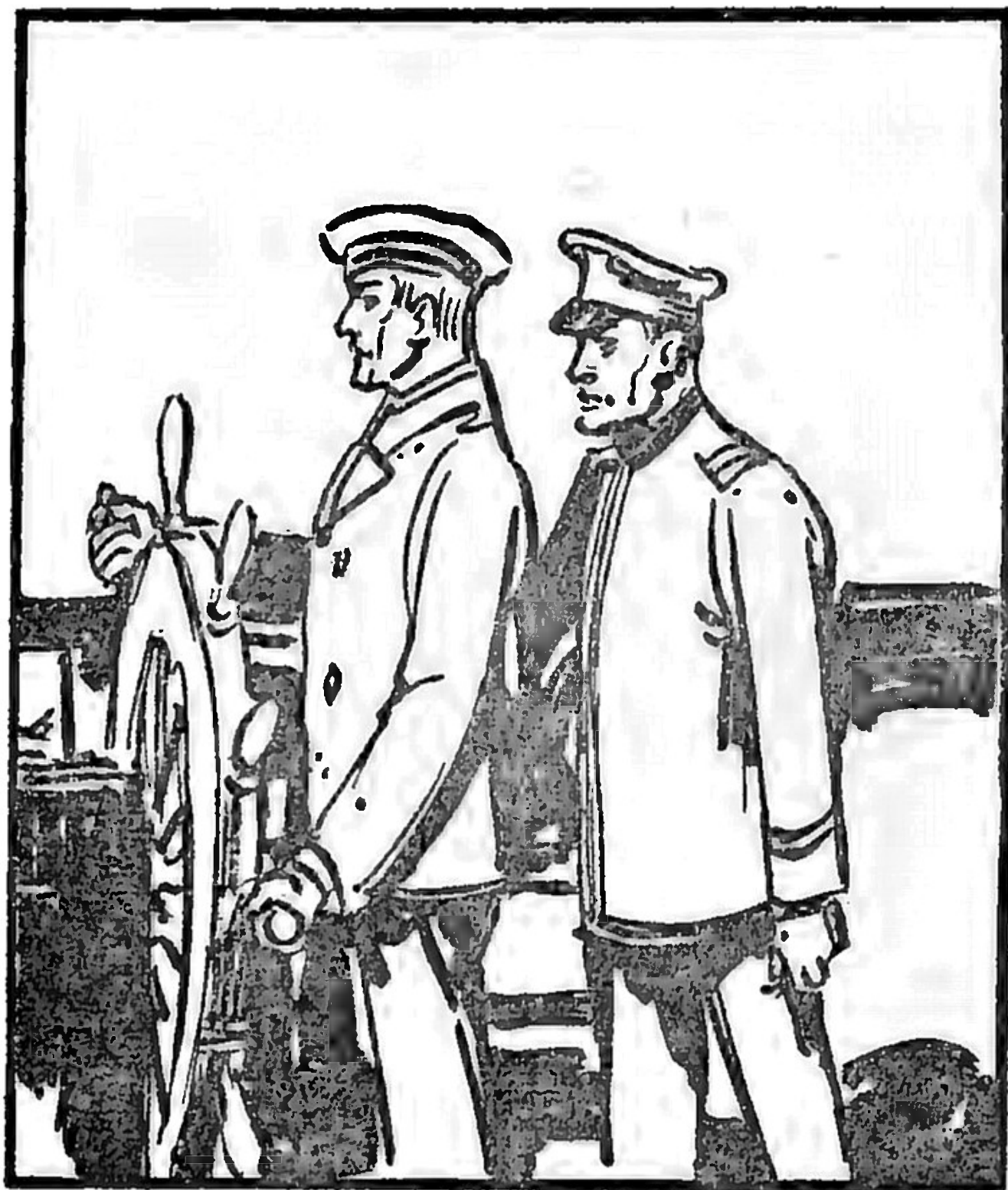
"You'd better turn in, Miss



They Talked About Chang and Sito

Kelly," Mac said finally. "We'll be in Saung by morning and there's no telling when you'll have a chance to sleep again."

Mac escorted the girl to her cabin, and went to the pilot house, where the Lieutenant stood beside the helmsman watching the dark river ahead. The gunboat was running without lights save for a small searchlight spotted on a large American flag flying on the stern.



They Were Watching the Dark River Ahead

“When we reach Saung,” the Lieutenant suggested, “I believe it will be better if my crew remains aboard and mans our guns to back you up.”

Mac nodded.

“According to reports there’s nothing but unorganized bands of looters in the neighborhood. I think my men can hold them off until we can get the consul and his party aboard.”



They Discussed Their Plan

As they discussed their plan of action the door to the pilot house opened and a seaman stepped forward, saluted and handed a paper to the Lieutenant.

“Radio message from the consulate in Saung, sir,” the sailor reported.

The Lieutenant stepped to a shaded light and scanned the message.

“Matters are more serious than



The Lieutenant Received a Radio Message

we thought, Sergeant MacLain," he said grimly. "Listen to this Looters in control of Saung. Town in flames! We are barricaded in the consulate. Ammunition running low. Hurry!"

"How long will it take us to reach Saung, Lieutenant?" Mac asked.

"We can't possibly make it before dawn," the Lieutenant replied and turned to the seaman.



There Was Trouble Ahead!

“Radio the consul in Saung and say that we are on the way. Advise him that we expect to reach Saung early tomorrow morning!”

“Sorry, sir,” the seaman replied, “but the radio operator has been unable to raise the consulate’s short-wave station. Their message came through very weak and then went out altogether.”

“Well, tell the operator to keep on trying to get them,” the Lieu-

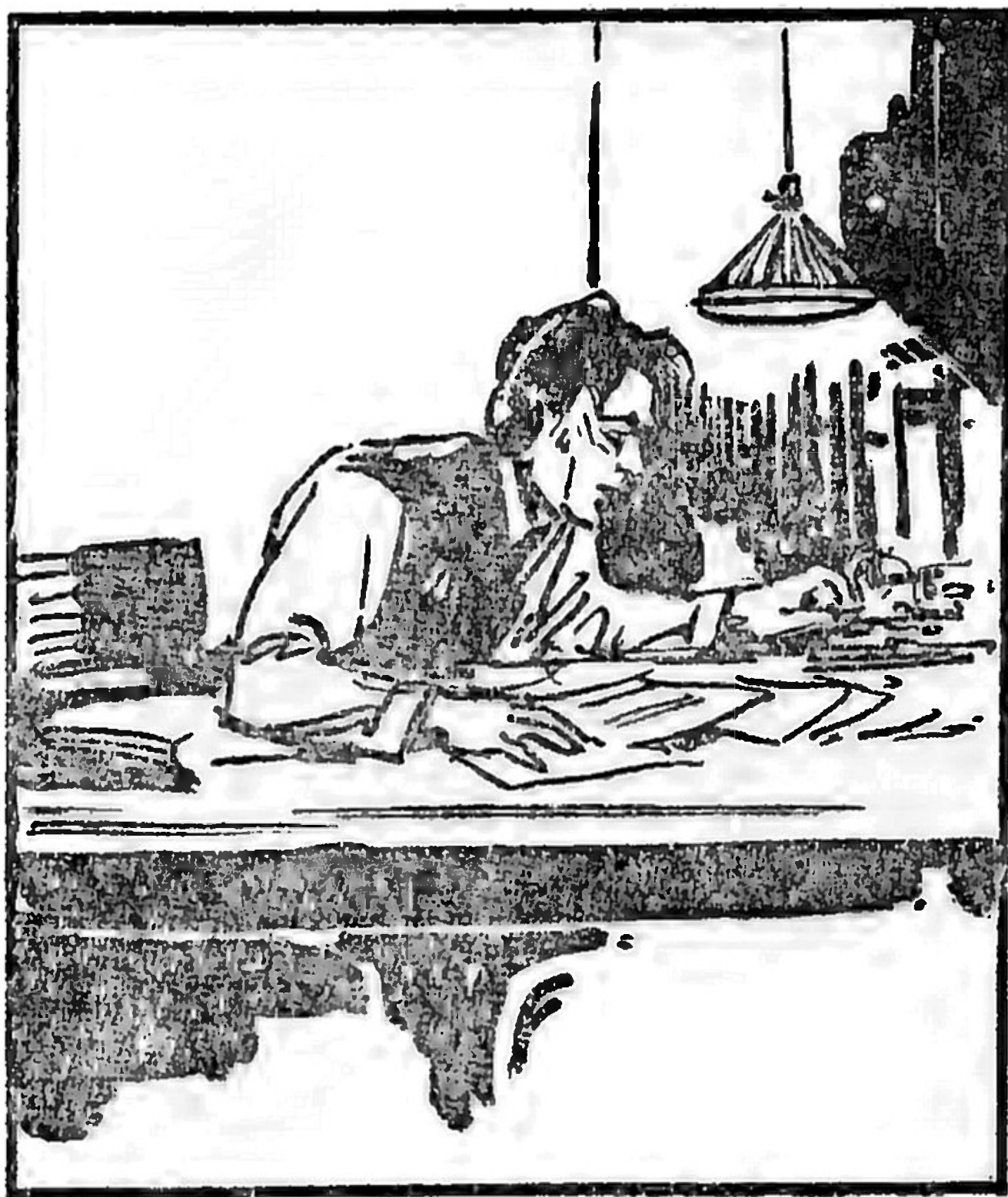


“Give Us Every Ounce of Steam You Can Take!”

tenant snapped and turned to the engine-room speaker. "Cameron!" he shouted. "Give us every ounce of steam you can take!"

All through the night the engines of the gunboat hammered and pounded. In the cramped radio room the operator tried in vain to raise the silent radio at Saung.

Since there was nothing Mac or his men could do until they arrived



The Operator Tried to Contact Saung

at the besieged consulate the Sergeant gave his men their orders and turned in. He slept in fitful snatches. Every few minutes he was awakened by the sound of gunfire and several times there was a "rat-ta-tat" of lead slugs on the steel hull of the gunboat. Finally he dropped off into the deep sleep of exhaustion only to be aroused by pounding on the door of his cabin.

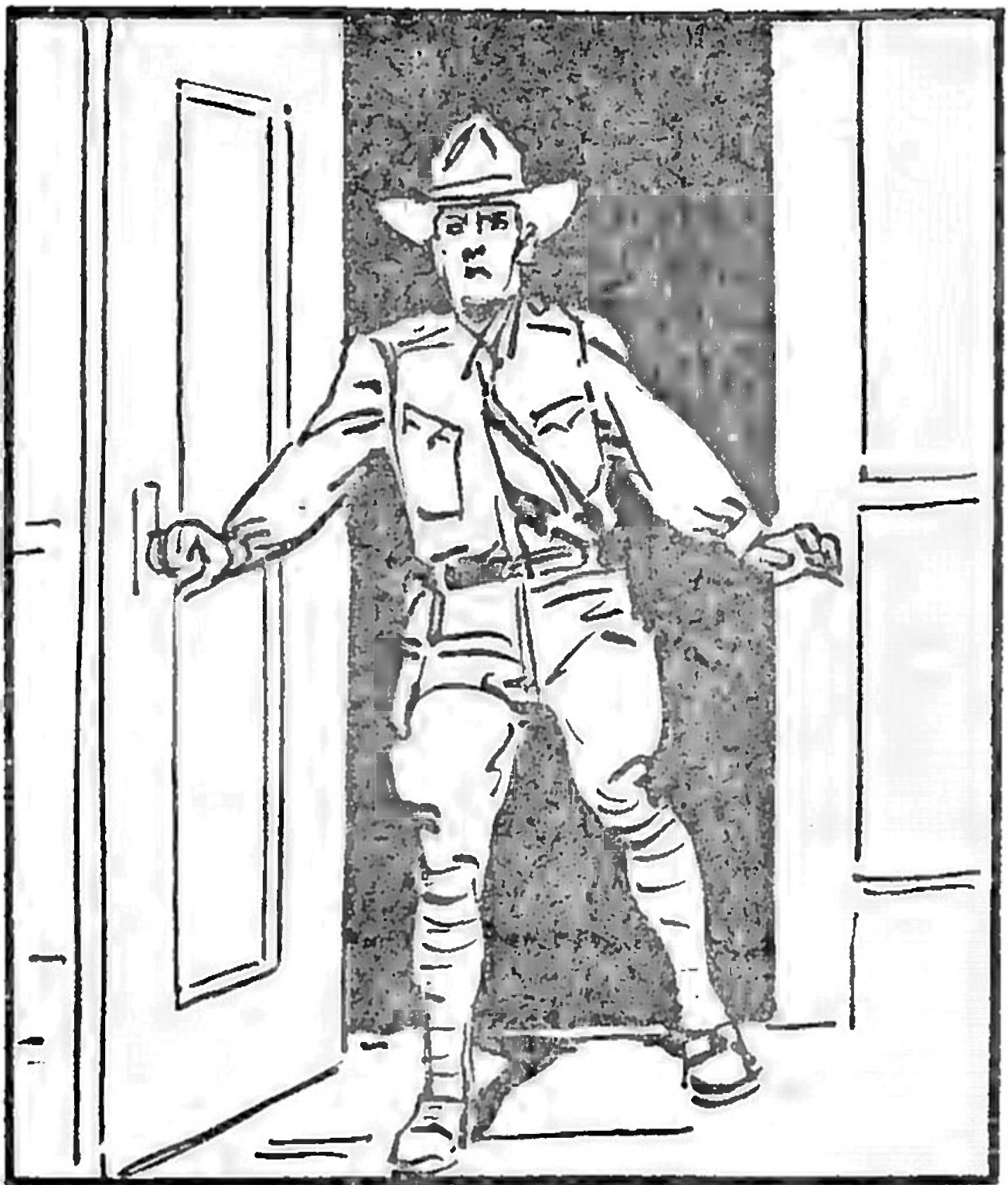


He Slept in Fitful Snatches

“Lieutenant Harris would like to see you in the pilot house, Sergeant,” a seaman called.

Mac was fully dressed. As he hurried to the pilot house he noticed that the engines had ceased to pound. The gunboat was riding at anchor. Mac glanced out of a porthole in surprise. It was still pitch black and no lights showed along the shoreline.

“What’s up?” he asked the Lieu-



"What's up?" He Asked

tenant as he stepped into the pilot house.

Lieutenant Harris grimly pointed beyond the bow of the gunboat. The searchlight on the bow was focused on the narrow entrance of a river at its junction with the Yangtze.

“That’s the Liho—and Saung is ten miles upstream,” he said.

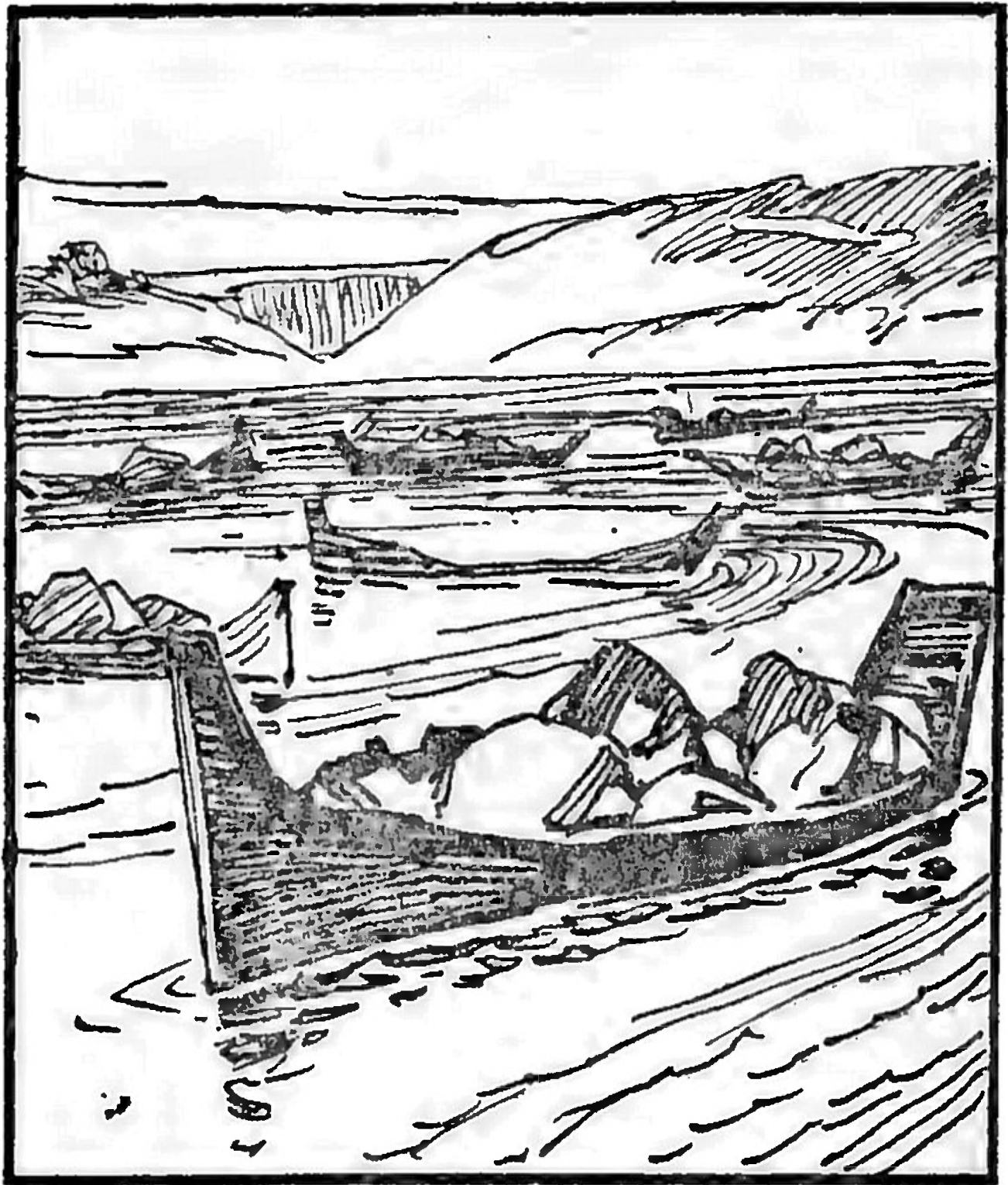
Mac looked at the muddy surface of the water and frowned. Strung



The Lieutenant Pointed Grimly Ahead

across the river and completely blocking the channel were a half-a-dozen stone-laden junks. They had been scuttled and sunk. Only their bows and sterns remained above the water.

“The Chinese have blockaded the Liho to keep the Japanese warships from raiding the inland towns,” the Lieutenant explained. “They weren’t put there to stop us, but we can’t get past just the same.”



The Channel Was Blocked With Junks

For a moment Mac studied the blockaded channel. It was obvious at a glance that only tons of dynamite would ever clear those stone-laden junks out of the way. Gunfire would not do it.

“Have you a power launch on board?” Mac asked the superior officer suddenly.

“Yes,” the Lieutenant replied. “But it won’t carry more than eight or ten men.”



"Have You a Power Launch on Board?"

“That’s big enough,” Mac replied. “If you can spare me a man to run it I’ll take my squad up to Saung.”

“Of course, but how will you get the refugees at the consulate down river?” Lieutenant Harris wanted to know.

“I’ll find a way when I get there,” Mac replied and hurried to rouse his men.

As he ran down the deck of the



He Hurried to Rouse His Men

gunboat Ann Kelly came out of her stateroom.

“Have we reached Saung?” she cried in surprise.

“Can’t make it with the gunboat,” he called. “I’ve got to go in a power launch with my squad.”

When he returned a few minutes later, followed by his men with their automatic rifles and the machine gun, Ann Kelly was waiting.



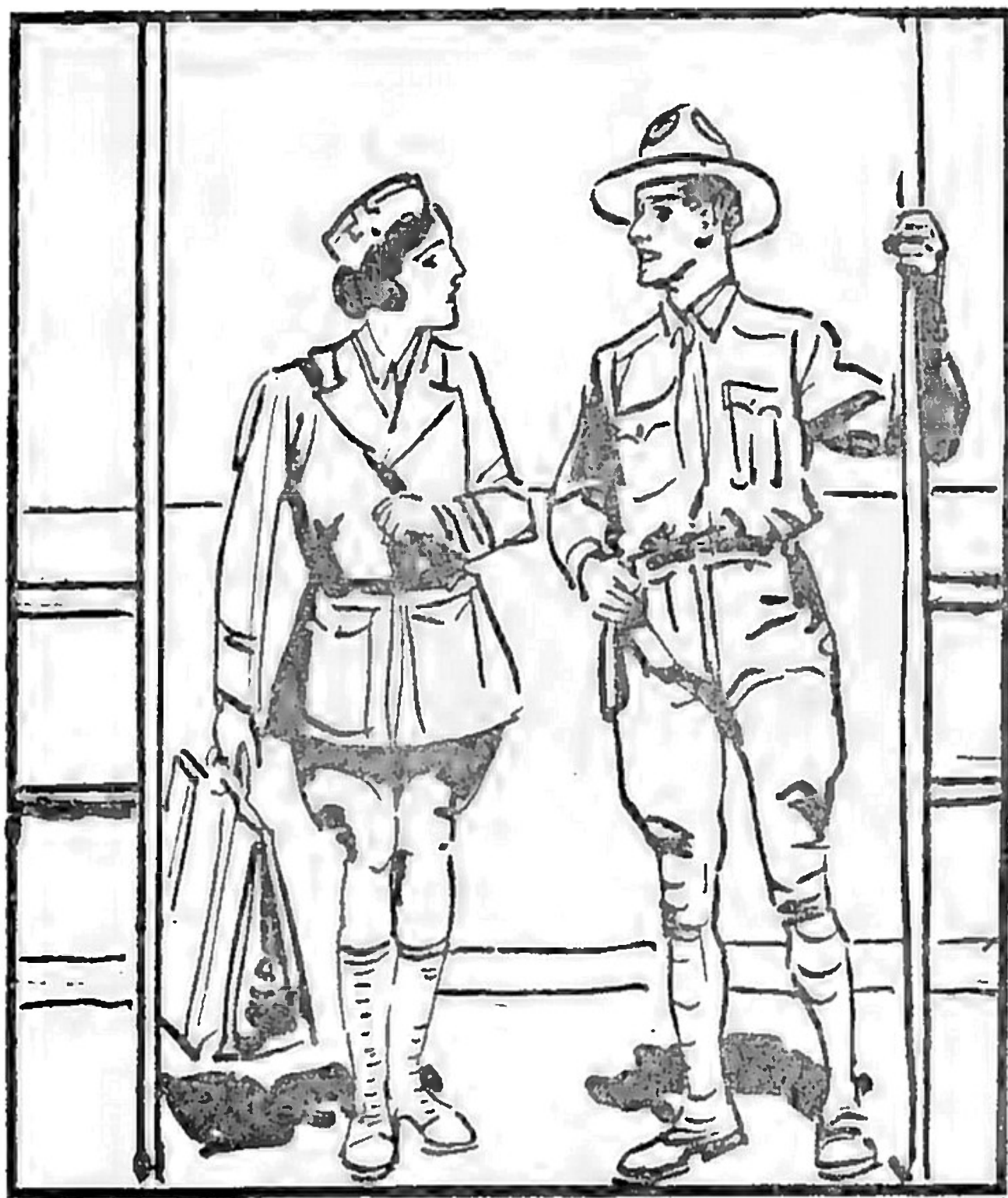
"Have We Reached Saung?"

“You’ve got to take me with you,” she said.

“It’s too dangerous, Miss Kelly. We’ll have to run a gauntlet of snipers in an open boat,” Mac replied.

“Just the same, I’m going,” the nurse answered. “I have my orders to go to Saung just the same as you have, and I’m going if I have to walk.”

By this time the power launch,



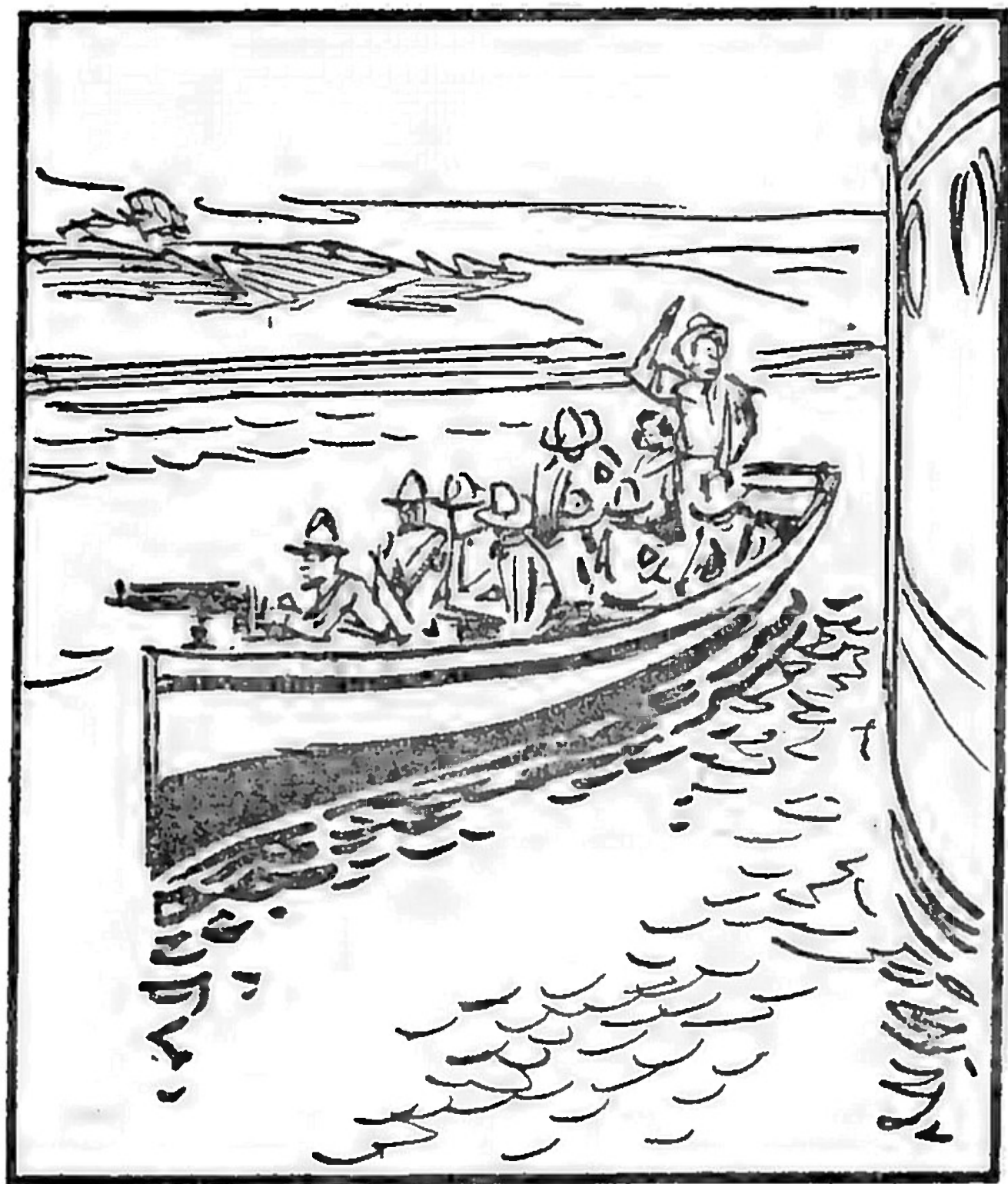
Ann Insisted on Going Along

an eighteen-foot, lifeboat type of craft had been swung over the side and into the water.

“All right, Miss Kelly,” Mac said curtly, “but don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Just then, as if to emphasize his warning, a rifle shot rang out from the dark shoreline and a bullet sang overhead.

Mac quickly assigned his men to various posts and ordered the



Mac Set out in the Launch

machine gun set up on the bow of the launch.

“We’ll stand by until we hear from you,” Lieutenant Harris called as the launch was ready to shove off. “I’ll do my best to blast a way through the blockade as soon as it’s light, but I’m afraid it’s hopeless.”

“With any luck we should be able to make it to Saung and back before sundown,” Sergeant Mac

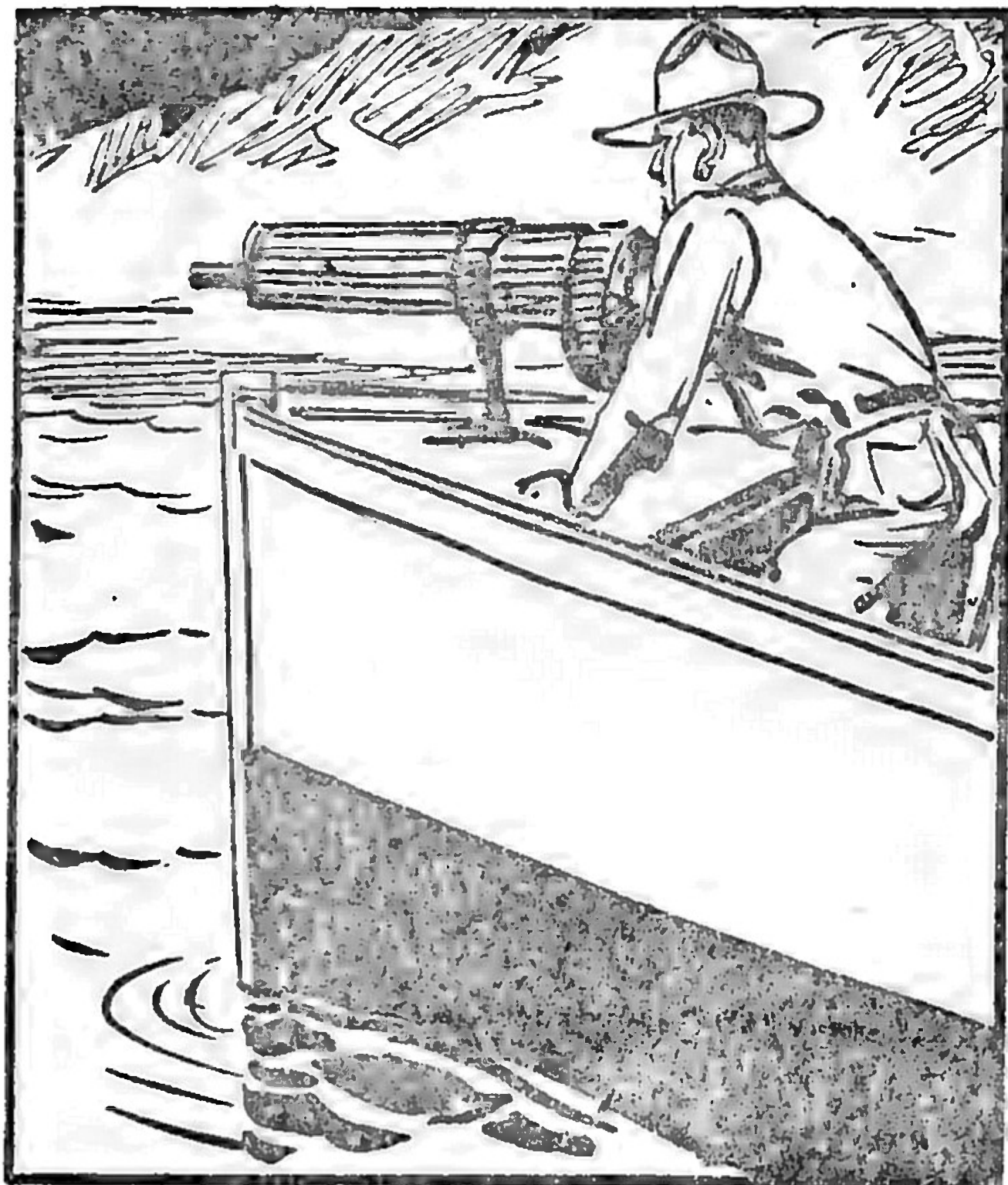


"We'll Stand By."

called back and ordered the launch under way.

The launch moved away from the gunboat and approached the string of sunken junks. There was no sign of life on the partly submerged crafts, but Mac took no chances.

He brusquely ordered his men to lie down in the bottom of the launch and placed Ann Kelly in the most sheltered spot. He then took

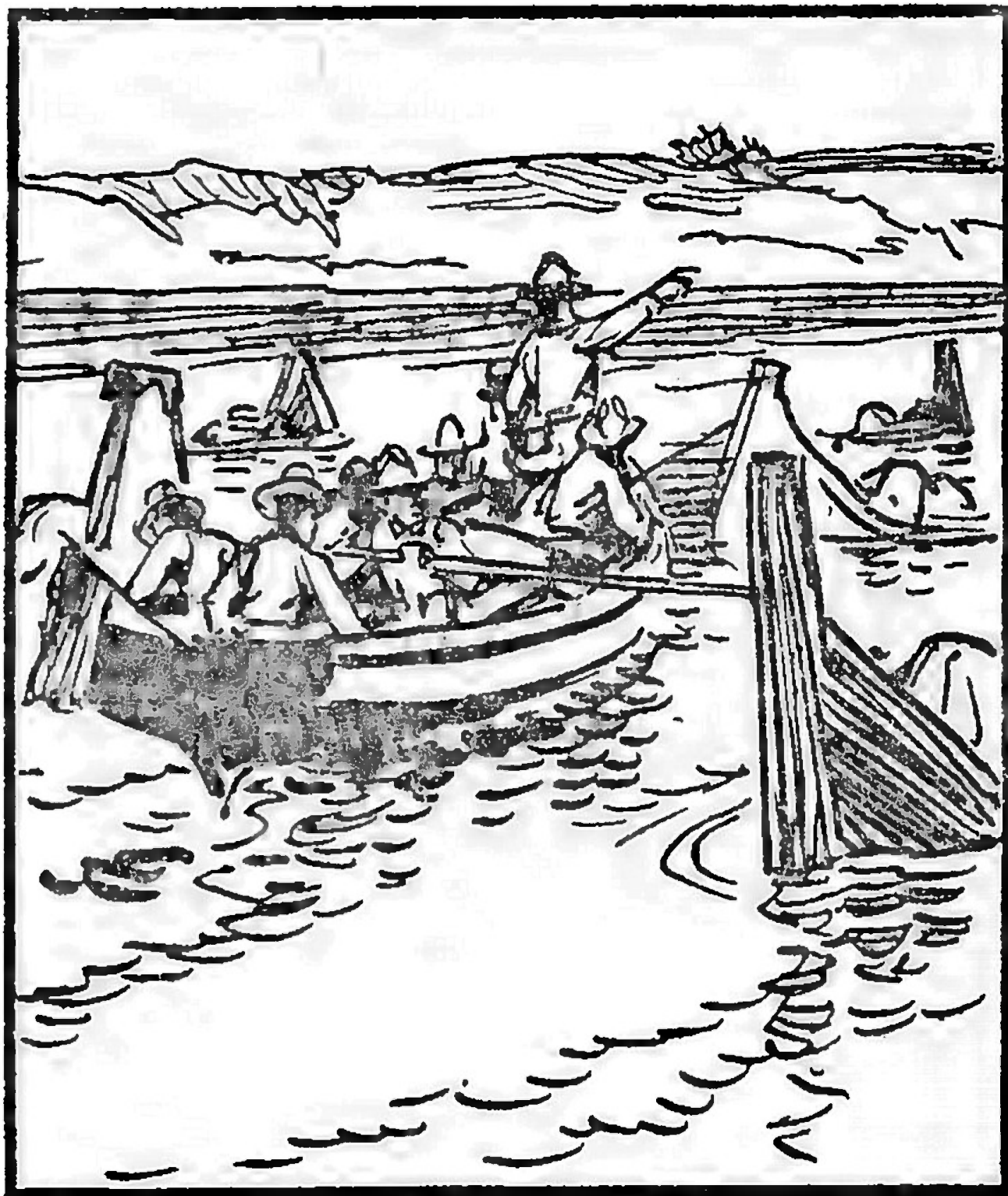


A Machine Gun Was Set up on the Bow

up a position at the bow, his finger curved on the trigger of the machine gun.

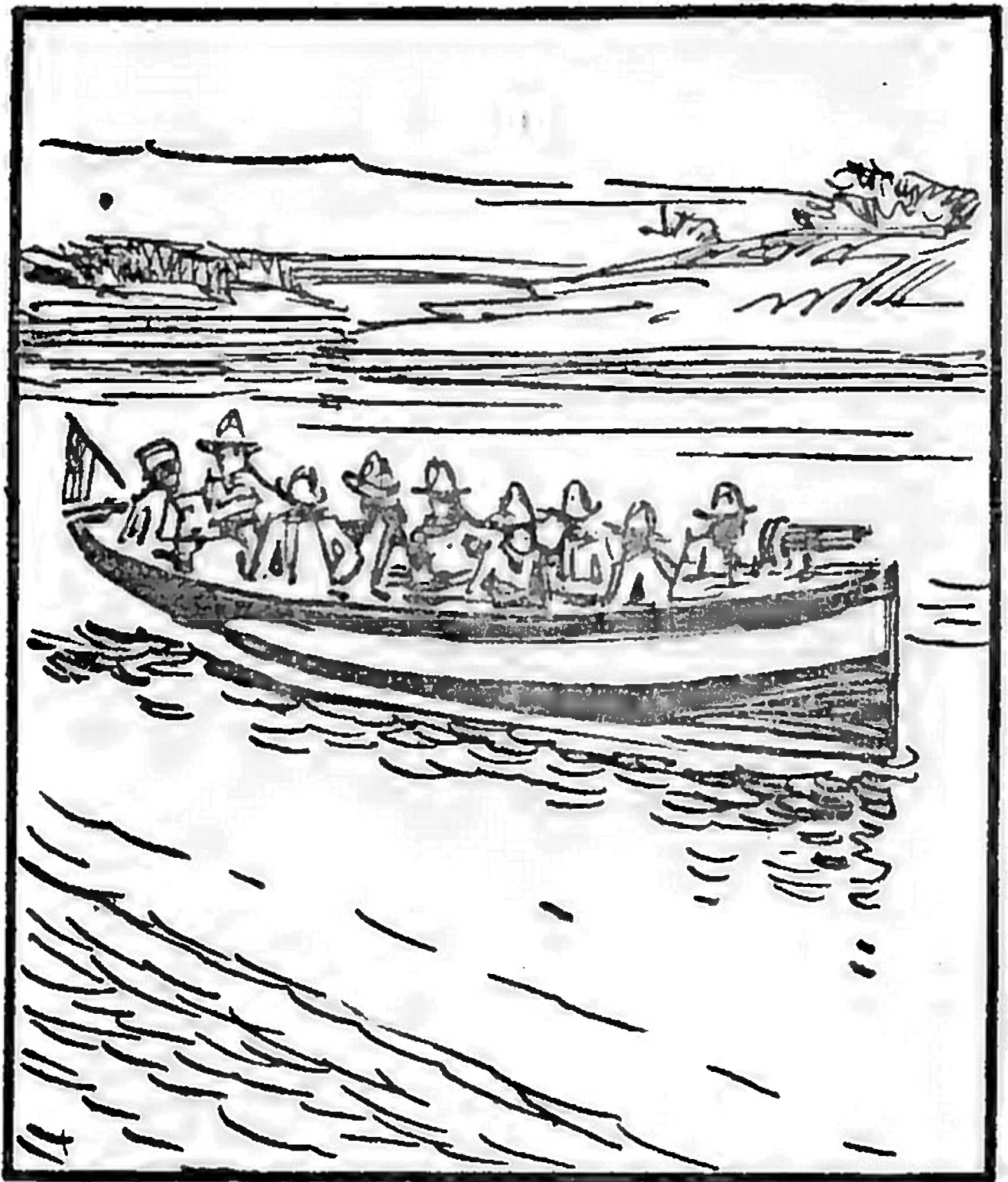
The launch moved along the string of junks until Mac caught sight of a narrow opening between two of the crafts. He signaled to the seaman at the helm and the launch swung through the gap and headed up the Liho.

They were hardly clear of the junks, however, before scattered



They Moved Slowly up the River

gunfire sounded from both shores. The shots went wild and Mac held his fire. A few minutes later the river widened out and the sniping fire died down.



They Proceeded Upstream Without Interference

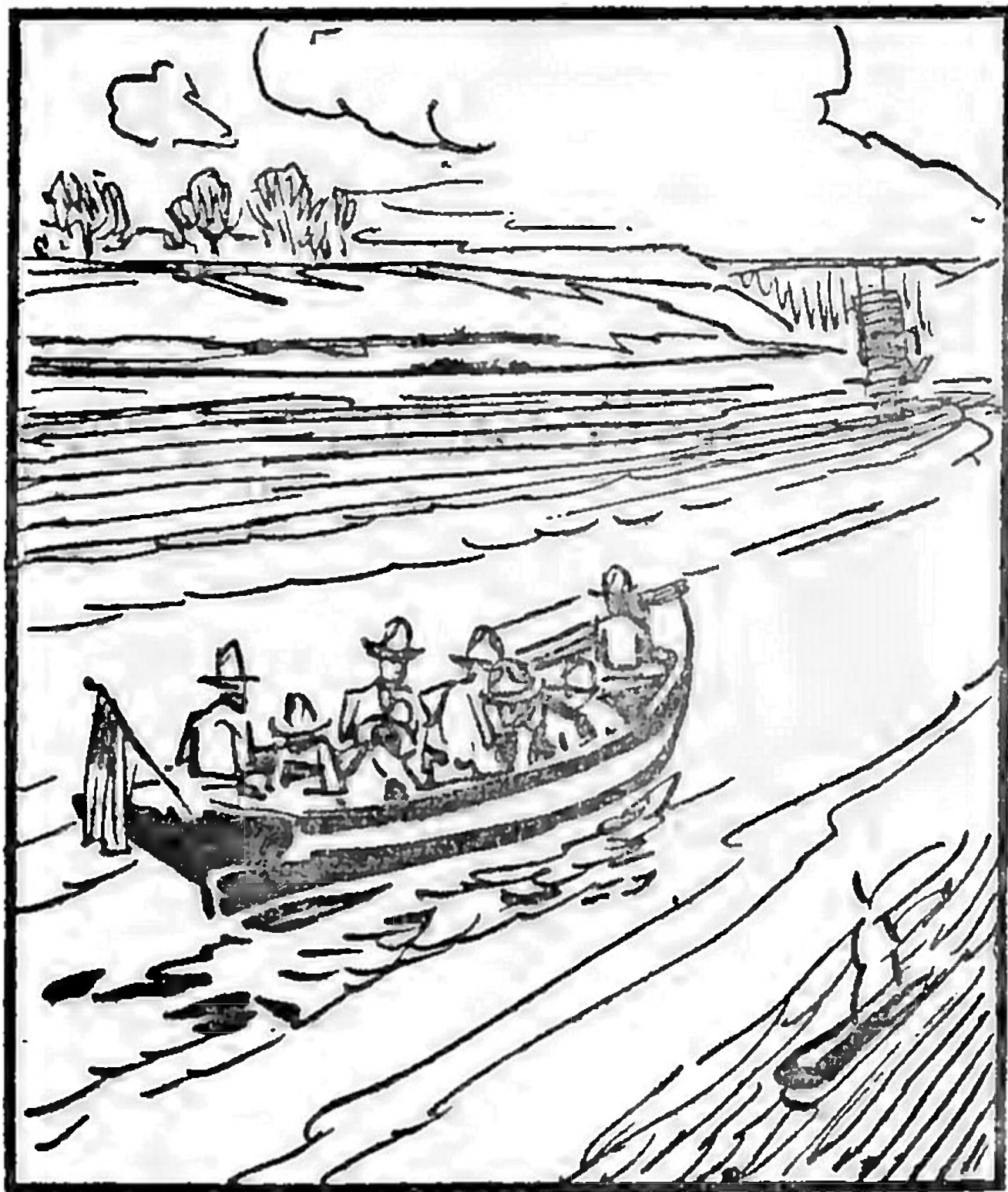
CHAPTER VIII

SURPRISE ATTACK

For an hour the launch proceeded upstream without any interference.

The first streaks of dawn began to light the eastern sky before they ran into more difficulties.

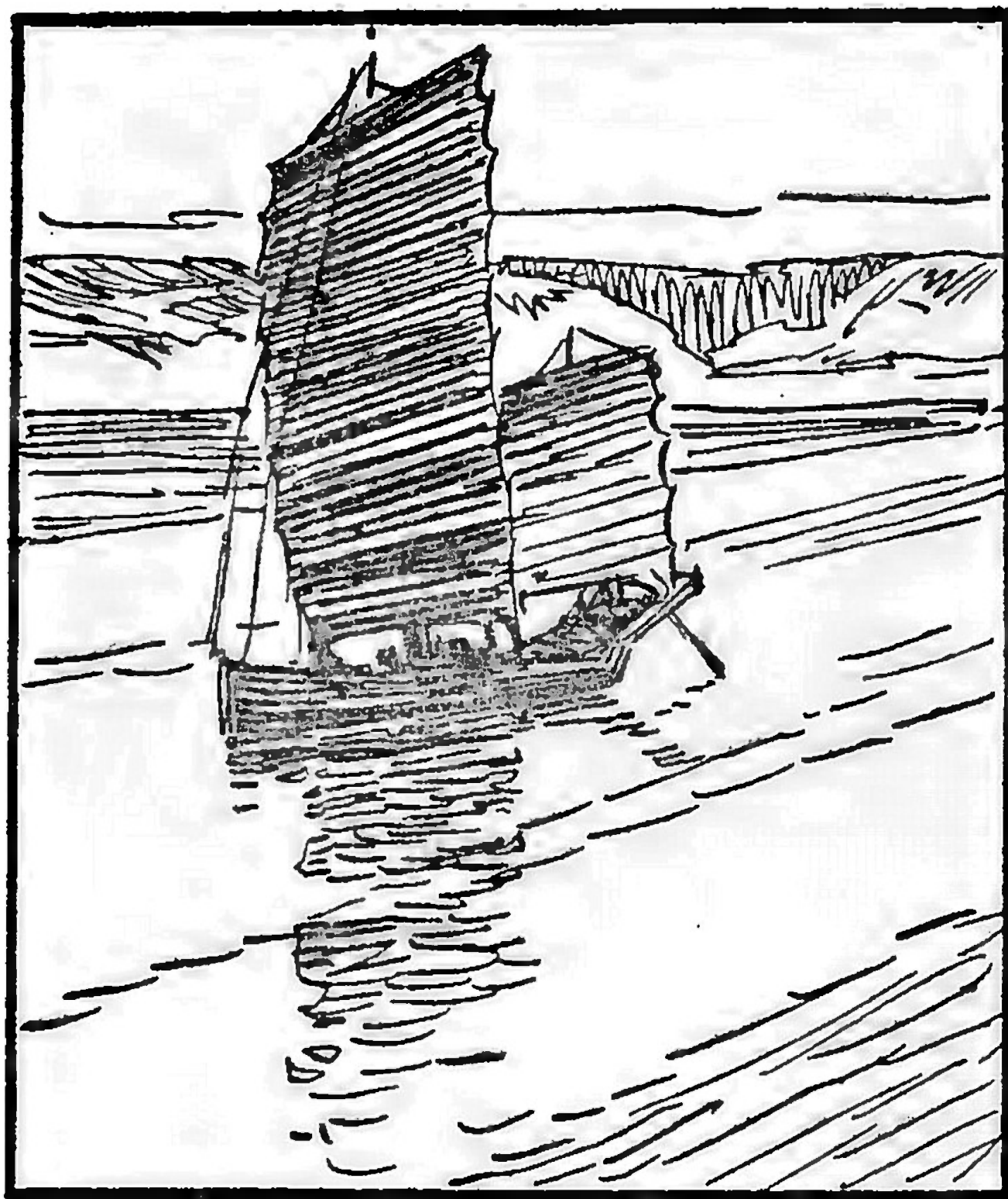
This time trouble came in the



The Junk Was in Midstream

form of an innocent-looking junk drifting slowly downstream. Only a helmsman, at the long sweep astern, was in sight.

This in itself was enough to arouse Mac's suspicion. The junk was in midstream, and this too caused Mac to wonder if this was a trick. With so many Japanese war planes flying over the country and machine-gunning everything in sight most junks hugged the



The Junk Looked Suspicious

shoreline if they ventured on the river at all.

“Swing wide of that junk,” Mac called to the seaman in the stern of the launch. “All right, men,” he added, “unlimber your automatic rifles! Get ready on the machine gun, Shorty!”

As the launch swung over toward the left bank of the river it began to look as if Mac’s suspicions were well founded. The slow-mov-



"Get Ready on the Machine Gun!"

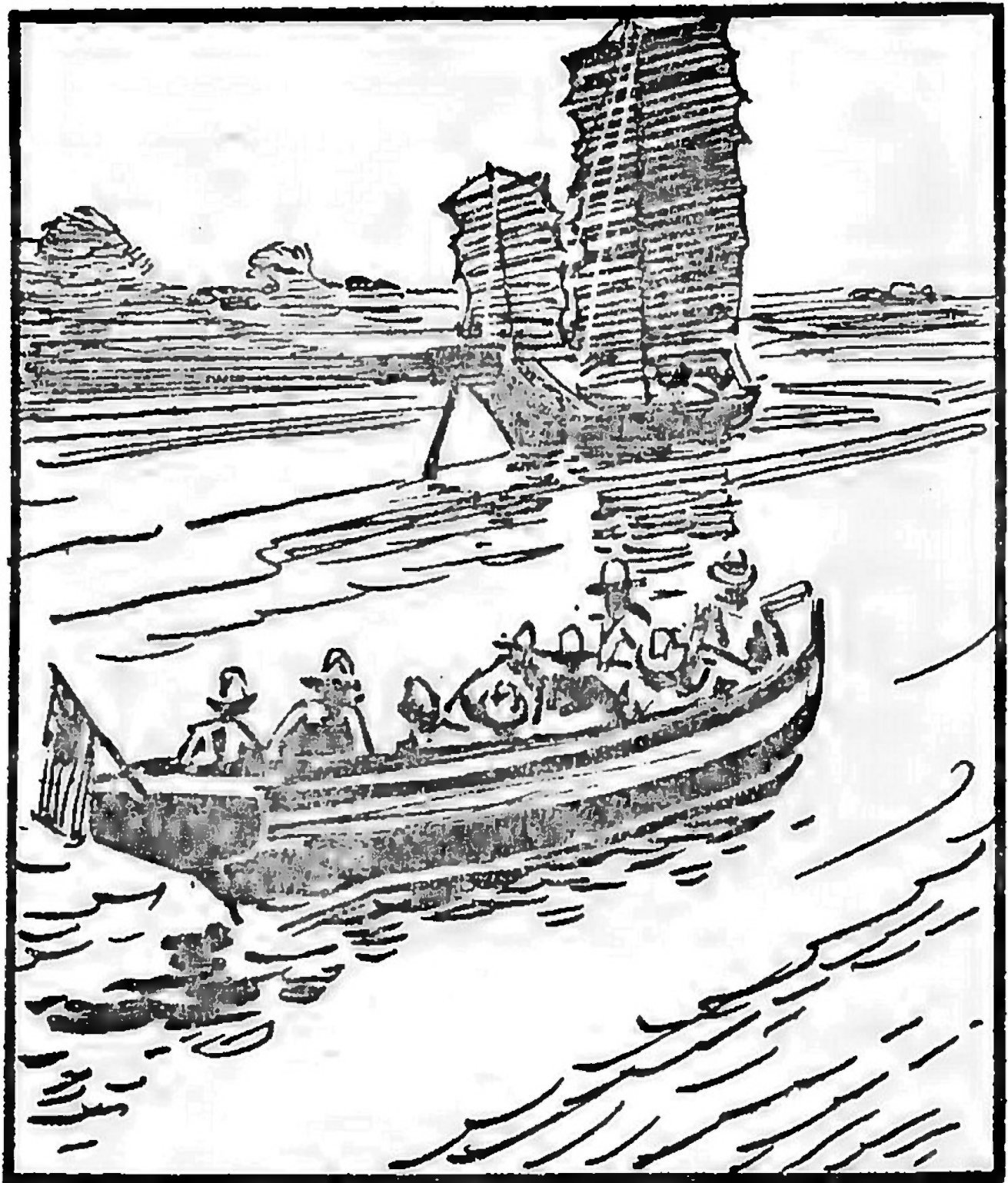
ing junk began to swing over toward the same side.

“Ready, men,” Mac called out.

As the minutes passed it became increasingly obvious that the junk, slow moving as it was, would be able to head off the launch.

“Cut across to the other side of the river,” Mac ordered.

The helmsman swung the launch hard over, but as he did so the junk also sluggishly changed its course.



The Junk Moved Slowly in Their Path

“Load!” Mac barked to his men grimly.

The snap of automatic clips followed his tense command. Out of the corner of his eye Mac saw Ann Kelly raise her head and look at the oncoming junk.

“Get down and stay down,” he snapped.

Ann Kelly glared at him but obeyed.

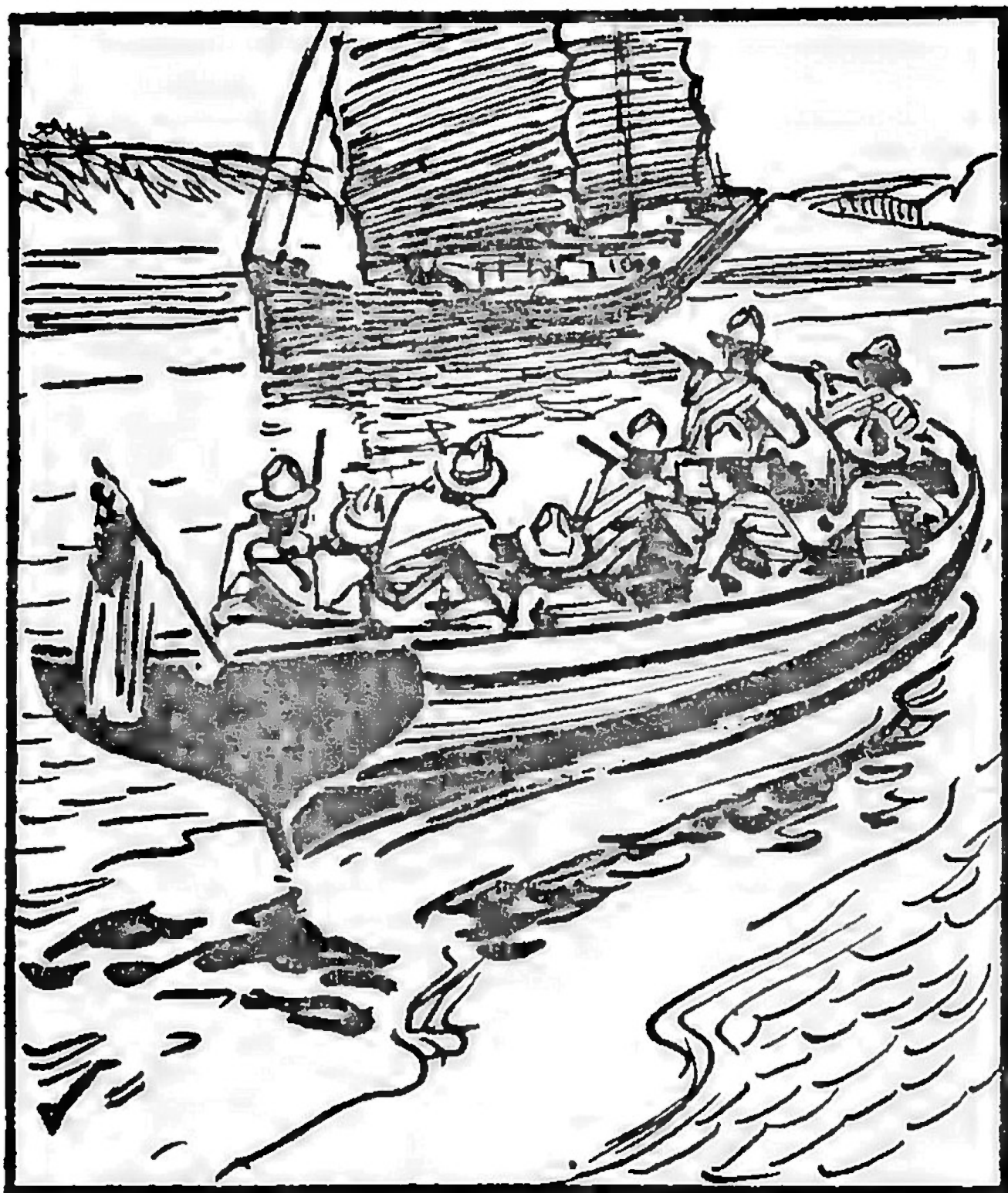
By this time the two crafts were



“Get Down and Stay Down!”

less than a hundred yards apart. On board the junk only the helmsman was in sight, but Mac felt certain that its hold held a band of river pirates. He knew that the American flag fluttering at the stern of the launch would be no protection from their attack.

Tense moments passed, punctuated by the throb of the launch's motor. Still there was no sign of hostility from the junk save for the



Every Man Was Prepared

fact that it was obviously trying to head off the launch.

Corporal Shorty, crouched behind the machine gun in the bow, turned his head and called to Mac.

“Lemme fire a burst over that Chink’s head, Sergeant! I’ll give him a haircut!”

“Hold your fire,” Mac ordered. “We’re not going to start anything, but if they try to stop us then”



"I'll Give Him a Haircut!"

Even as Mac spoke, a pile of boxes on the bow of the junk was suddenly shoved aside, revealing an old iron cannon aimed point-blank at the launch. Half-a-dozen coolies crouched behind it. It was an old muzzle-loading cannon fired by a fuse that even now sputtered toward its deadly charge.

“Swing over,” Mac shouted to the seaman at the helm of the launch.



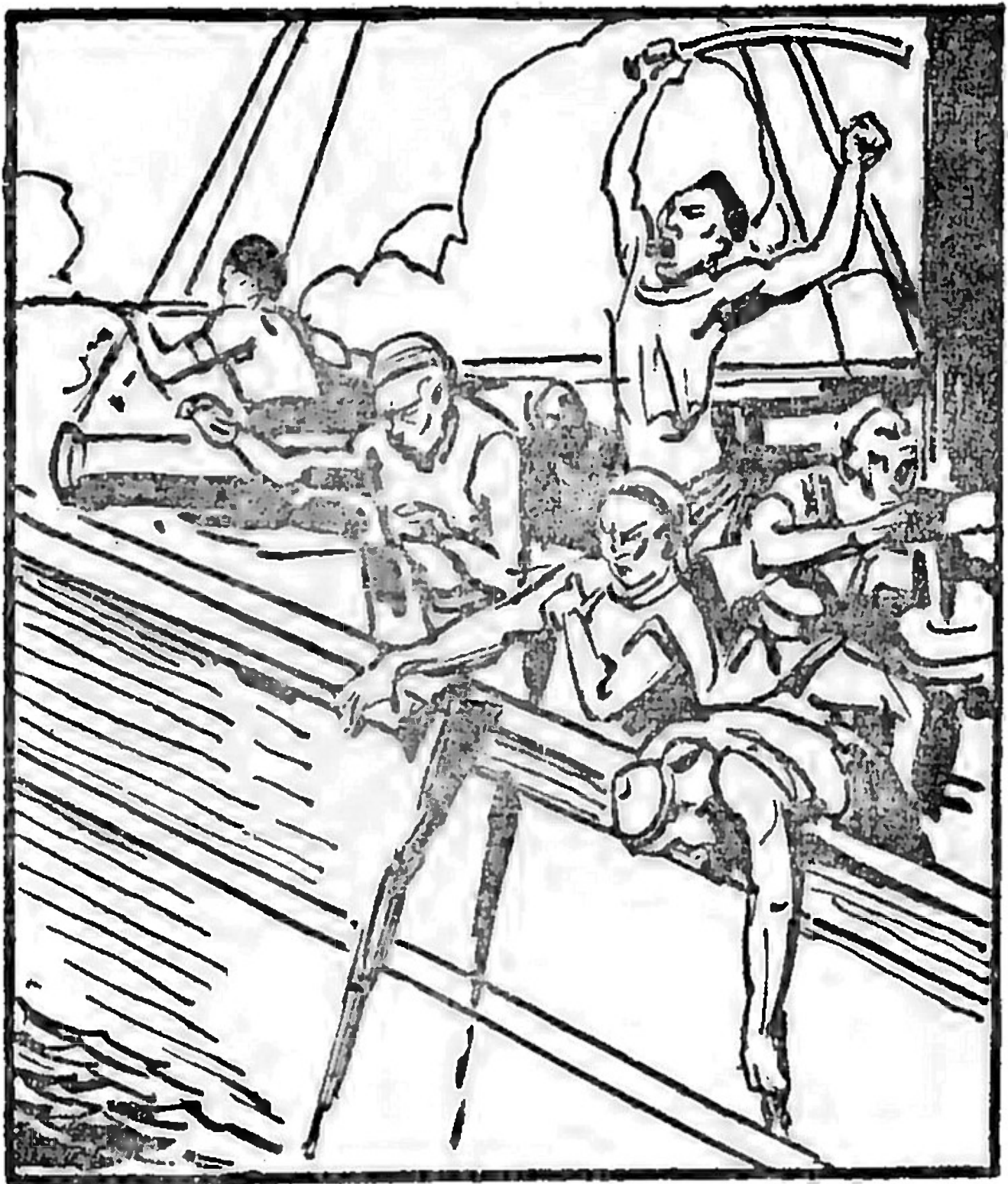
Half-a-Dozen Coolies Swarmed on Deck

He knew the deadly effectiveness of those old cannons at close range. They were invariably loaded with bolts and scrap iron—and were as deadly as modern shrapnel.

“Fire!” Mac ordered.

Machine gun and automatic rifles sent a hail of steel at the crouching figures on the junk.

Even as Mac shouted his command a dozen men swarmed to the deck of the junk. They were armed

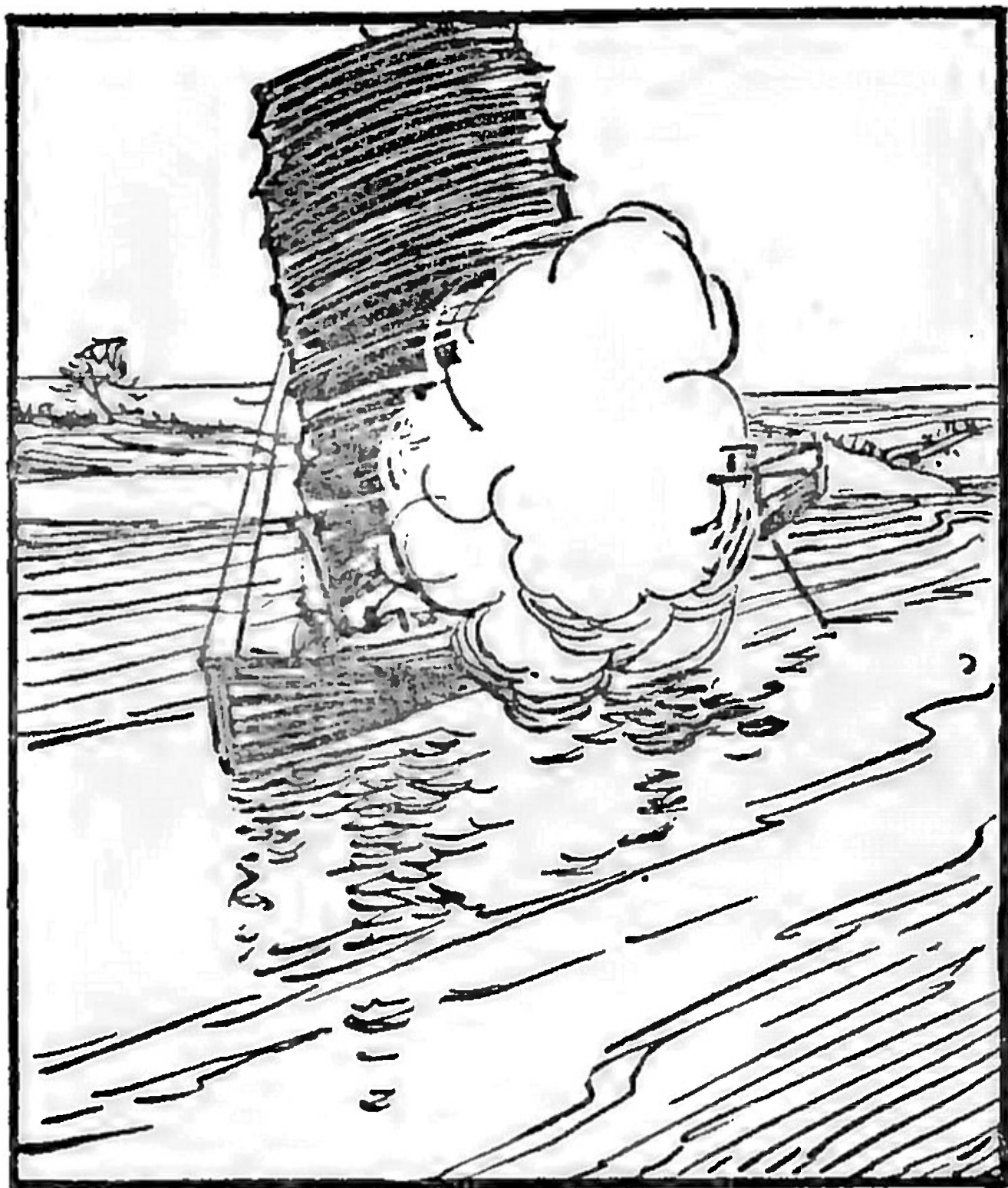


They Were Armed With Rifles and Swords

with rifles and ancient swords. They fell under the withering fire of the Marines, but a second later the ancient cannon on the bow exploded.

A sheet of flame leaped from its muzzle. Its grapeshot charge churned the water close to the bow of the launch. There was a splintering crash as the scattered shot ripped into the bow.

With a cry of pain Corporal



The Ancient Cannon Exploded

Shorty threw up his hands and fell back from his chattering machine gun. Mac caught him as he fell and dragged him to a clear space in the center of the boat.

A private dropped his automatic and leaped to the now silent machine gun without waiting for orders. Ann Kelly crawled to the wounded corporal's side.

"I'll take care of him," she cried to Mac above the roar of gunfire.



Mac Caught Him as He Fell

“Good girl,” Mac cried. “Looks like a broken shoulder.”

Shorty grinned weakly.

“Imagine me getting knocked for a loop by a cannon as old as Methuselah!”

“Miss Kelly’ll fix you up, Shorty,” Mac called and swung back into action.

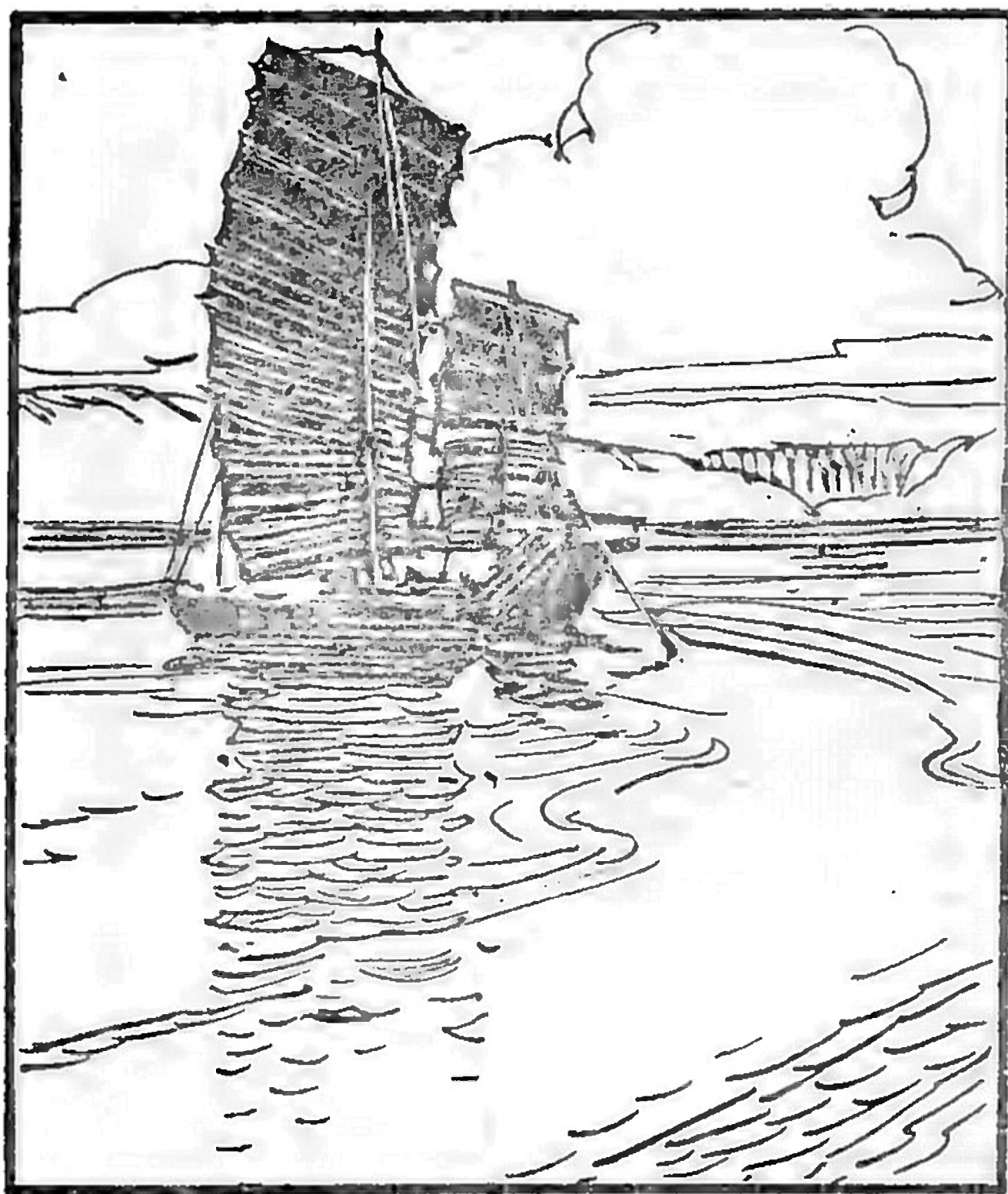
Water was pouring into a jagged hole below the waterline. Mac ripped off his coat and stuffed it



Ann Kelly Bandaged His Shoulder

into the hole. Meanwhile the hot fire of automatic rifles and machine guns had driven the pirates to cover, and only scattered shots came from the junk. The helmsman at the long sweep was gone and the junk was drifting away on the sluggish current.

“Cease fire,” Mac called a moment later. “Proceed upstream,” he ordered the naval helmsman and assigned two men to patch the



The Junk Was Drifting Away

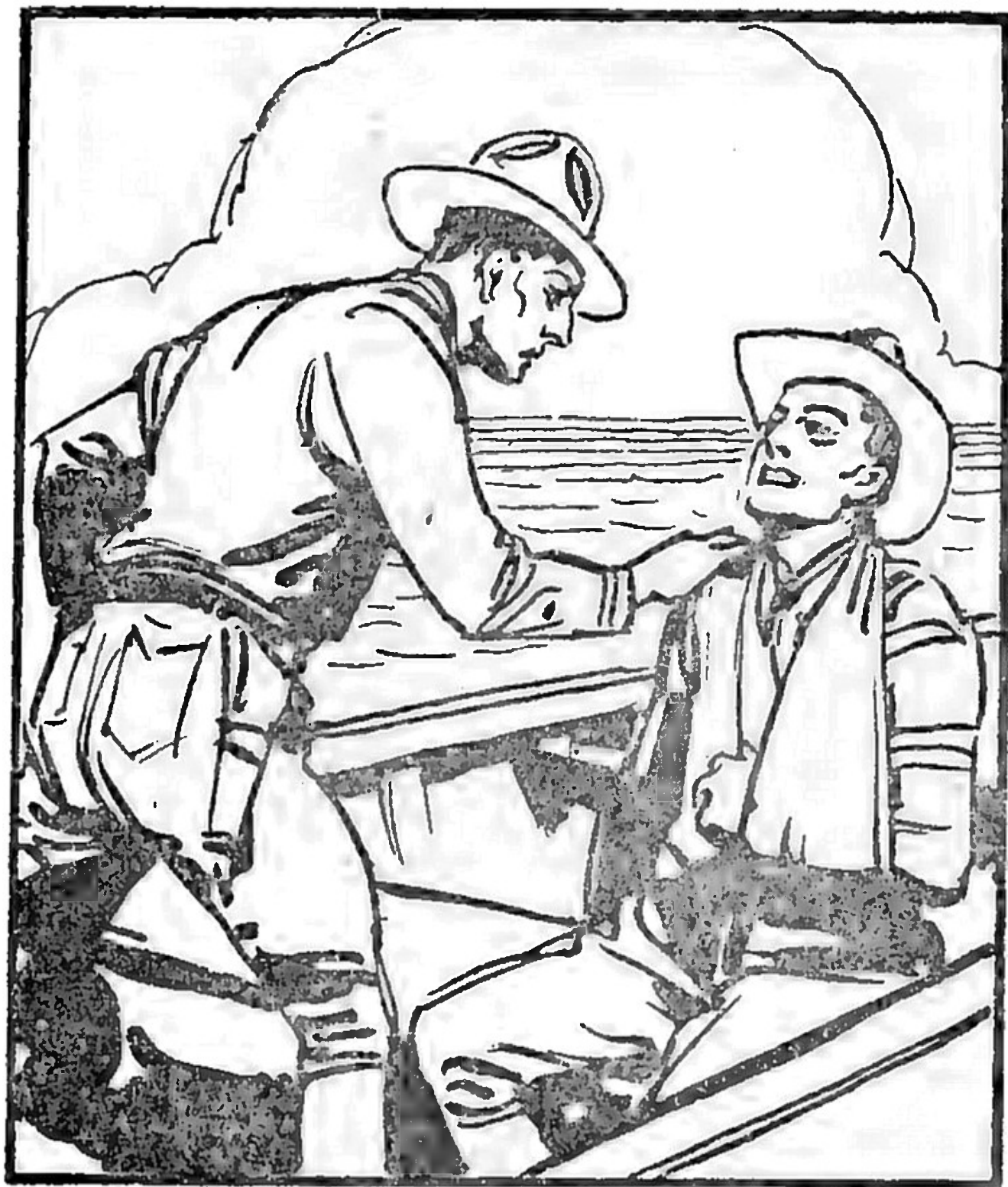
hole in the launch's hull.

Moving back amidship Mac found Ann Kelly putting the finishing touches on a neat and efficient bandage on Shorty's shoulder.

"How do you feel, Shorty?" Mac asked.

Shorty glanced at Ann Kelly and grinned.

"Like a million dollars," he replied.



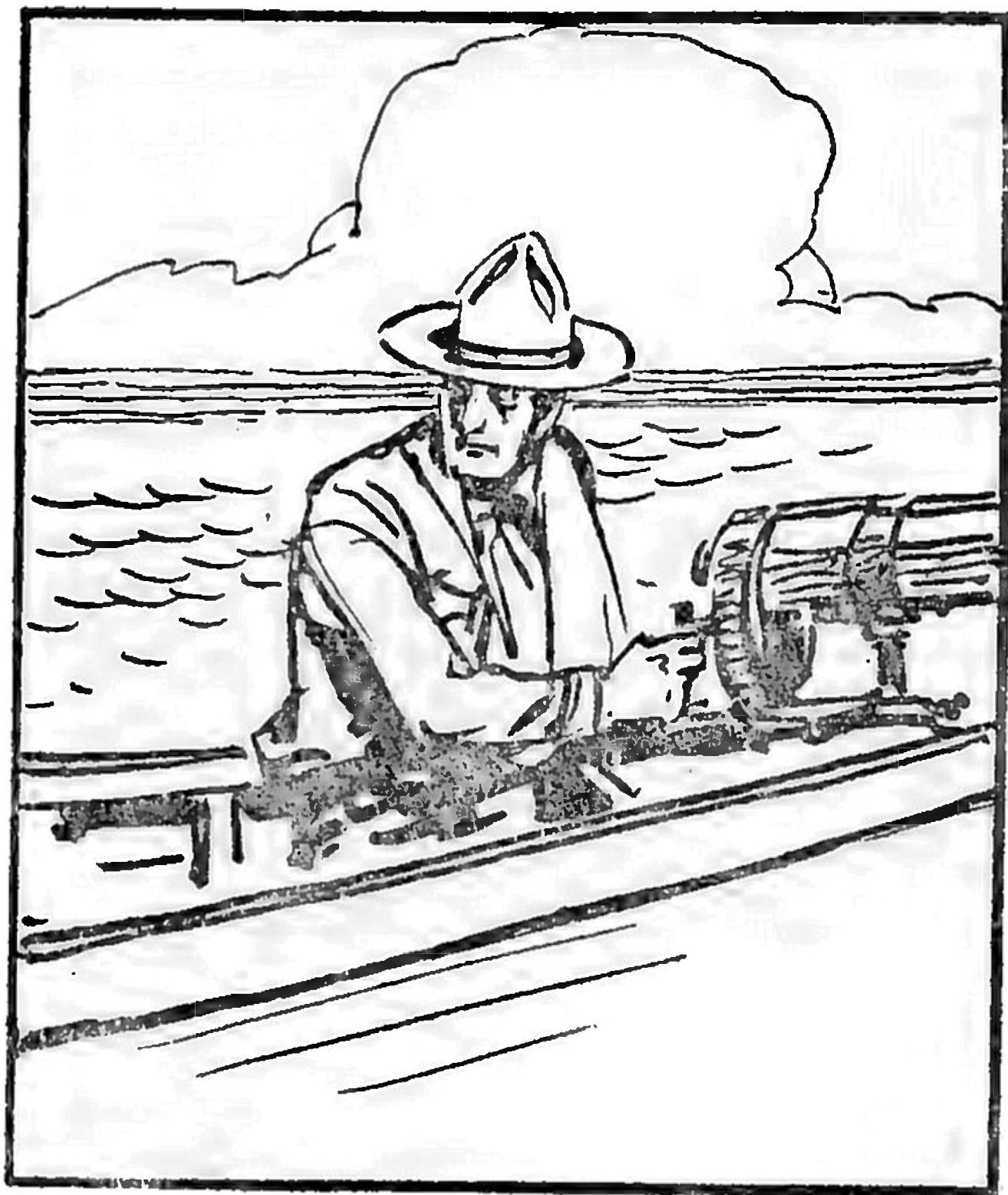
“How Do You Feel, Shorty?”

“Thanks,” Mac said, looking at Ann Kelly. He wanted to say more, but he could not find the words.

“Lucky for me you let Miss Kelly make the trip,” Shorty added.

Mac nodded and was on the point of apologizing for his earlier curtness when the private stationed at the bow called out:

“Smoke ahead, Sergeant! Looks like a town burning!”



Shorty Remained Beside the Machine Gun

“That will be Saung,” Mac replied. “Distribute extra rounds of ammunition, Private Slade! Check your side arms and hand grenades! Prepare to land!”



“Prepare to Land!” Mac Shouted

CHAPTER IX

SMOKE, FIRE, AND LEAD!

The landing party was organized and ready before they came within sight of Saung itself. Over the tree tops they could see billows of smoke rising skyward, and as they rounded the last bend of the Liho they saw the town. It was situated

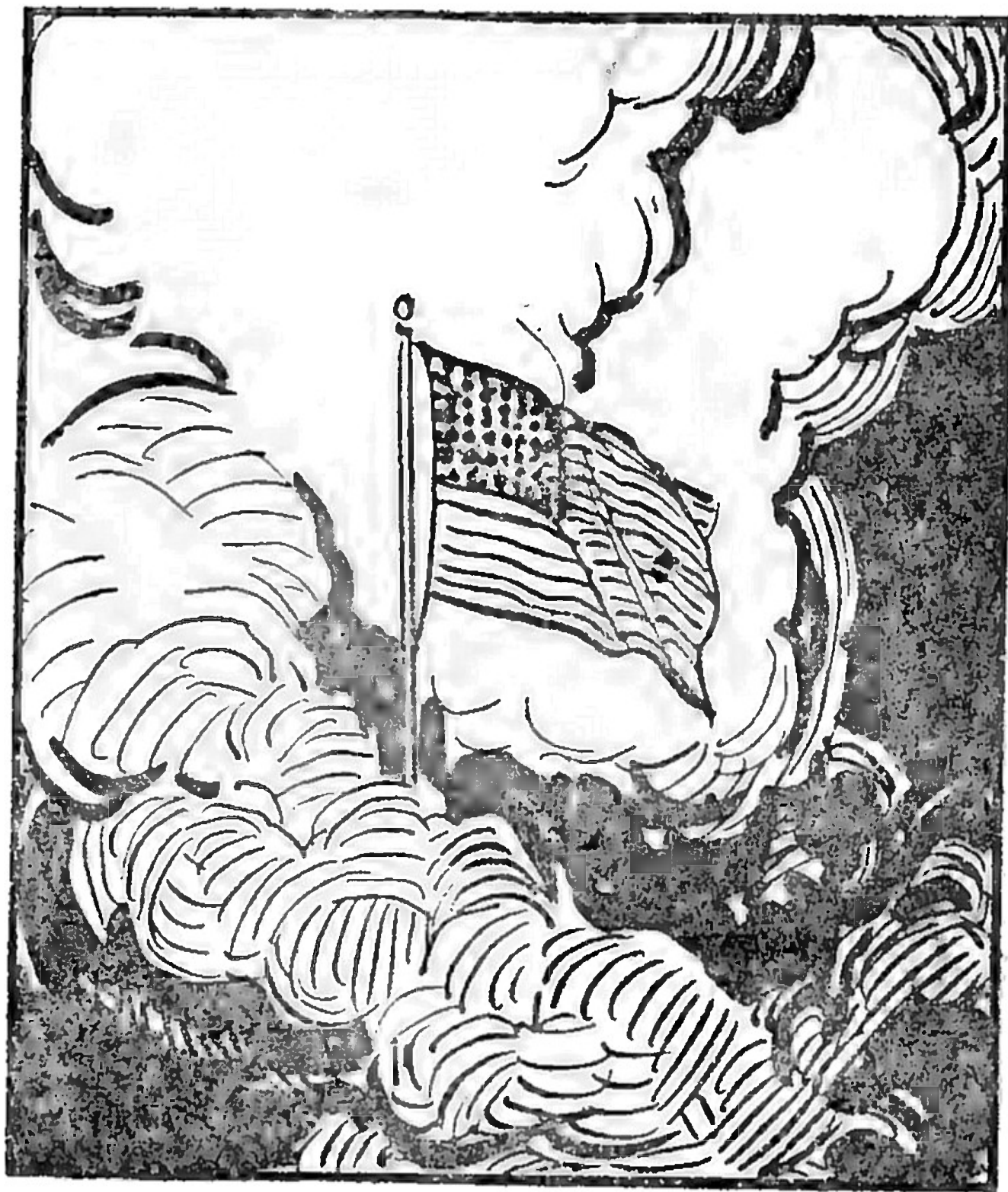


Billows of Smoke Ahead

on the flat lands on the south bank of the river. A good part of the town was in flames and as they drew nearer the sound of gunfire drifted down with the wind.

“Look!” Ann Kelly cried suddenly.

Through a rolling cloud of black smoke coming from a warehouse on the river bank, the little group in the launch caught sight of an American flag fluttering from a

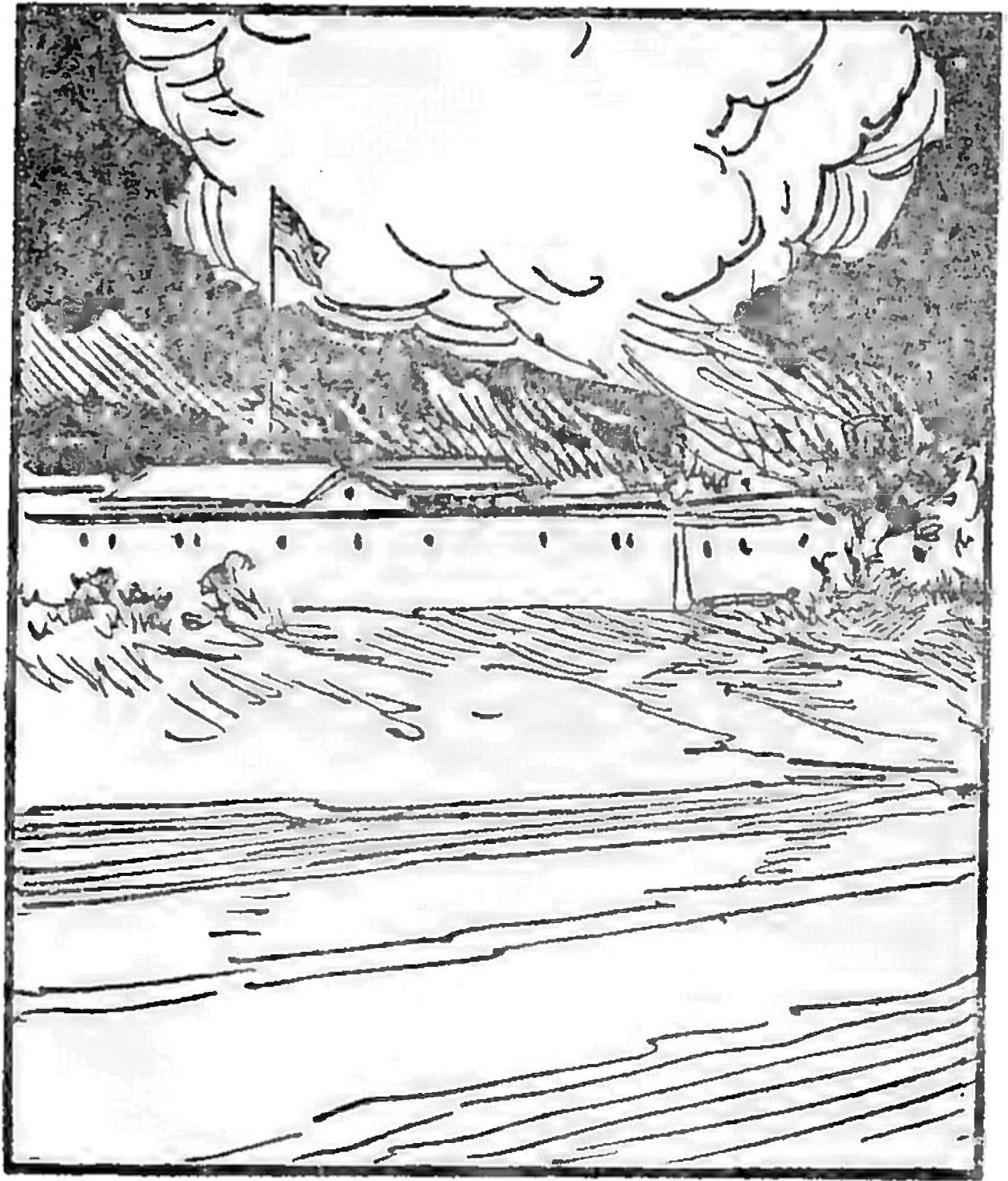


They Caught Sight of the American Flag

pole in the center of a walled compound.

As near as Mac could make out there was no fire inside the compound, indicating that the consul and the American refugees gathered there had so far been able to hold off the looters who were pillaging and burning the rest of Saung.

“Keep close to the south bank,” Mac ordered. “There’s no use



They Neared the Compound

staying out in midstream and advertising our arrival. They'll spot us soon enough."

Back amidships Corporal Shorty tried to sit up but Ann Kelly forced him back gently.

"We'll tie up at the compound wharf," Mac ordered. "Shorty, you stay in the launch and man the machine gun in case anyone tries to capture it from the river side. Can you manage?"

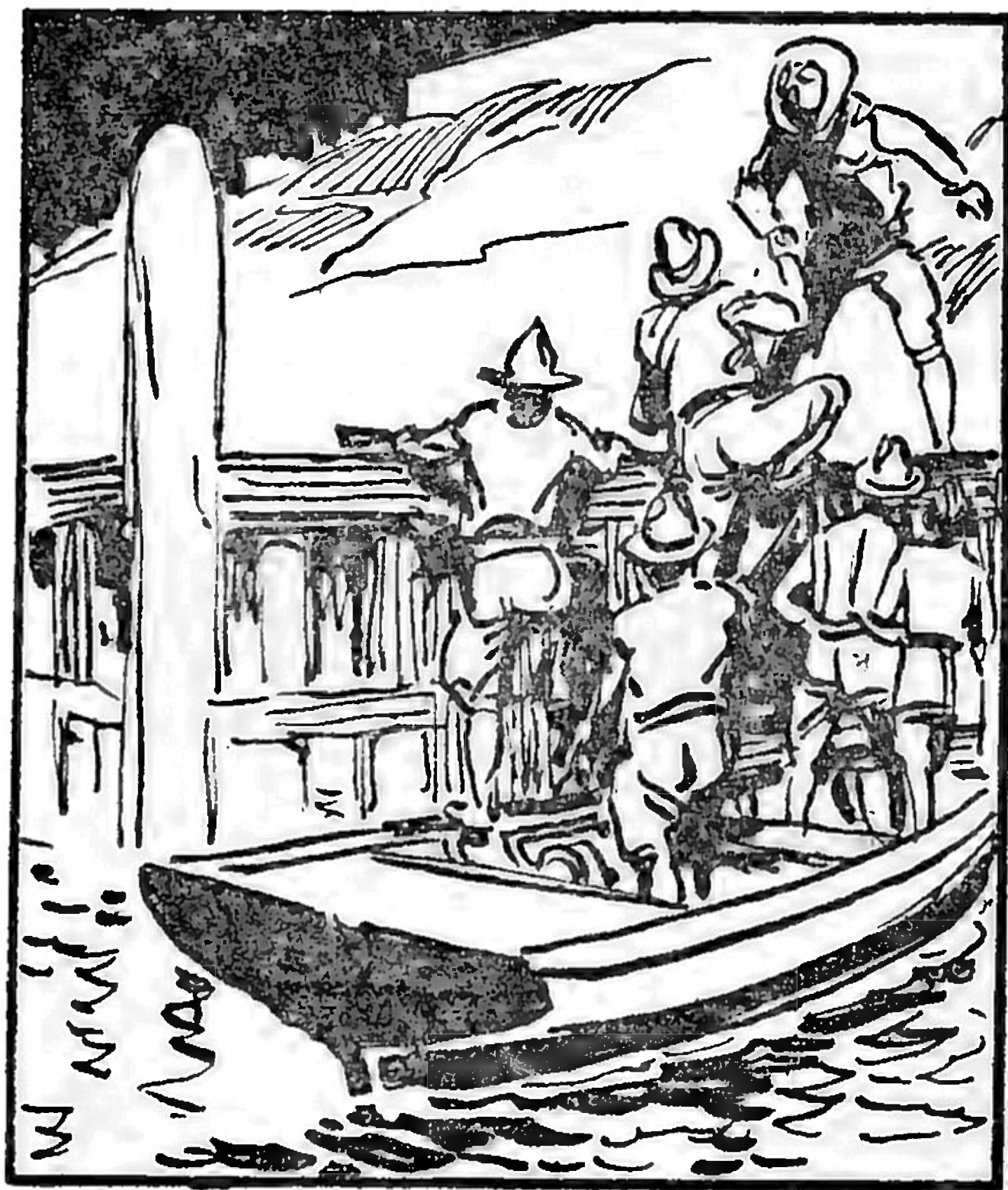


Ann Forced Him Back Gently

“Just prop me up there and fix it so I can get my good right arm on the trigger and the launch’ll be there when you get back.”

A quarter of a mile below the compound, wharf snipers on the shore started peppering at the launch. But Mac and his companions reached the dock without a scratch.

Mac glanced at Ann Kelly as the launch nosed up to the wharf



The Men Reached the Dock Safely

and the Marines leaped up and began answering the scattered gunfire from housetops beyond the high stone walls of the compound. He knew it would be useless to order her to stay in the launch. Besides, there was a sick woman in the consulate who might need her help.

“We’ll have to make a rush for it,” he said grimly. “Keep low and dodge from side to side when we



"We'll Have to Make a Rush for It."

cross the open compound," he warned her.

Ann Kelly nodded and smiled, although her lips were drawn tight. She knew, as well as any of the others, that swift, singing death lay in wait for them.

Firing from the windows of the consulate increased as Mac prepared his men for the dash!

"Deploy at the end of the wharf and make for the gate in the east



Mac Shouted Orders to His Men

wall," he ordered. "Stick close to me, Miss Kelly, and run as you've never run before."

As Mac and his Marines dashed for the consulate gate, the firing from the snipers and looters increased. Lead whined all around them. One of Mac's men went down with a bullet in his leg but a buddy helped him to his feet and they struggled toward the shelter of the stone wall.



One, of the Men Went Down

As they approached the east gate it swung open. A dozen yards from the gate another Marine went down. Mac, half dragging Ann Kelly, reached the gate and shoved her through. Then he whirled, ran back to where his man lay groaning in the dust, and picked him up.

As he turned to carry the Marine to safety he saw a looter aiming at him from a rooftop not fifty yards



Mac Shoved Ann Through the Gate

away. Whipping out his service revolver he fired once. The looter leaped for cover and a moment later Mac was inside the consulate compound, and the heavy gates had been swung into place and barred.



Mac Fired at a Looter

CHAPTER X

A DARING PLAN

As Mac lowered the wounded man gently to the floor, Dan Carson, the consul at Saung rushed up. He gripped Mac's hand with feverish eagerness. His face was haggard and drawn from the strain of sudden responsibility. He was



He Lowered the Wounded Man

young, inexperienced, and bewildered by the sudden turn of events.

“Thank heaven you’re here, Sergeant,” he cried.

“Yes, but the important thing is to get out of here, from the looks of things,” Mac snapped.

He saw Ann Kelly bandaging the leg wound of the first Marine who was hit, and called to her.

“Take care of this man as soon as you can, Miss Kelly!”



"Thank Heaven You're Here!"

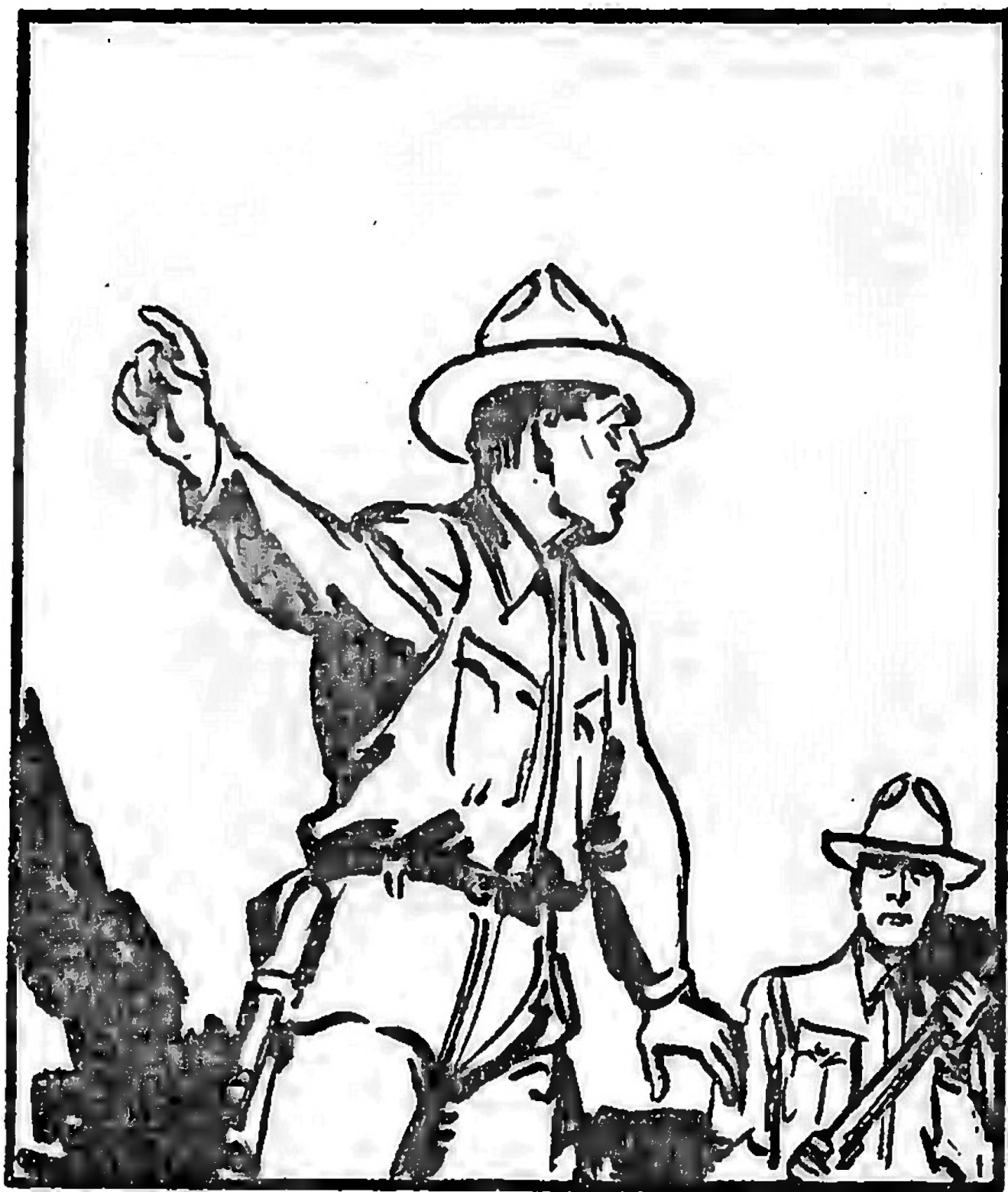
“What is your plan?” the Consul asked.

“I haven’t any. I make mine as I go along,” Mac snapped impatiently.

The gunfire from outside seemed to be increasing.

Mac of the Marines turned to the men of his squad who had not been wounded.

“Take up positions in the upper part of the house. Save your am-



"Take Your Positions."

munition but beat off any attempts to rush the walls of the compound!"

The men hurried to carry out his orders.

"Now," Mac said quickly as he turned to the consul. "How many persons are here that must be evacuated?"

"Twelve men, eight women and three children," Carson replied shakily. "You can't take us in that



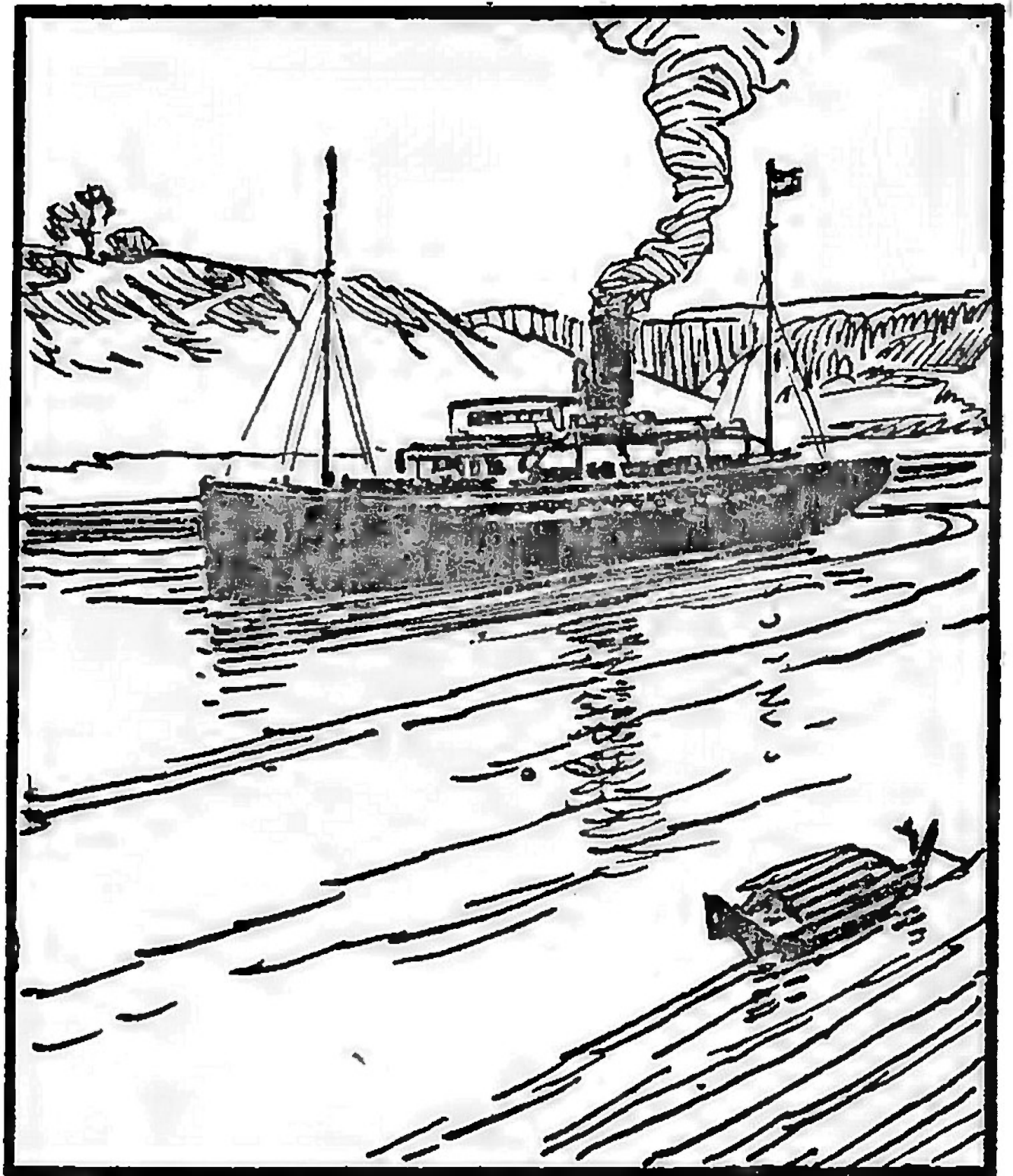
“How Many Persons Are Here?”

launch. Why didn't they send a gunboat from Shanghai?"

"Because the Liho is blockaded by stone-loaded junks where it joins the Yangtze. The gunboat is waiting for us there now," Mac replied.

"But how are we going to get down to it?" Carson asked, plainly frightened.

"You get your people together and have them ready to leave in an



The Gunboat Was Waiting

hour," Mac ordered. "I'll find a way."

Seeing that Ann Kelly was taking care of his wounded men, Mac hurried to the upper part of the consulate. He found his men crouched behind barricades of sandbags piled in the windows. He moved quickly to a window overlooking the waterfront. He knew there was only one answer to the consul's appeal. He had to have a

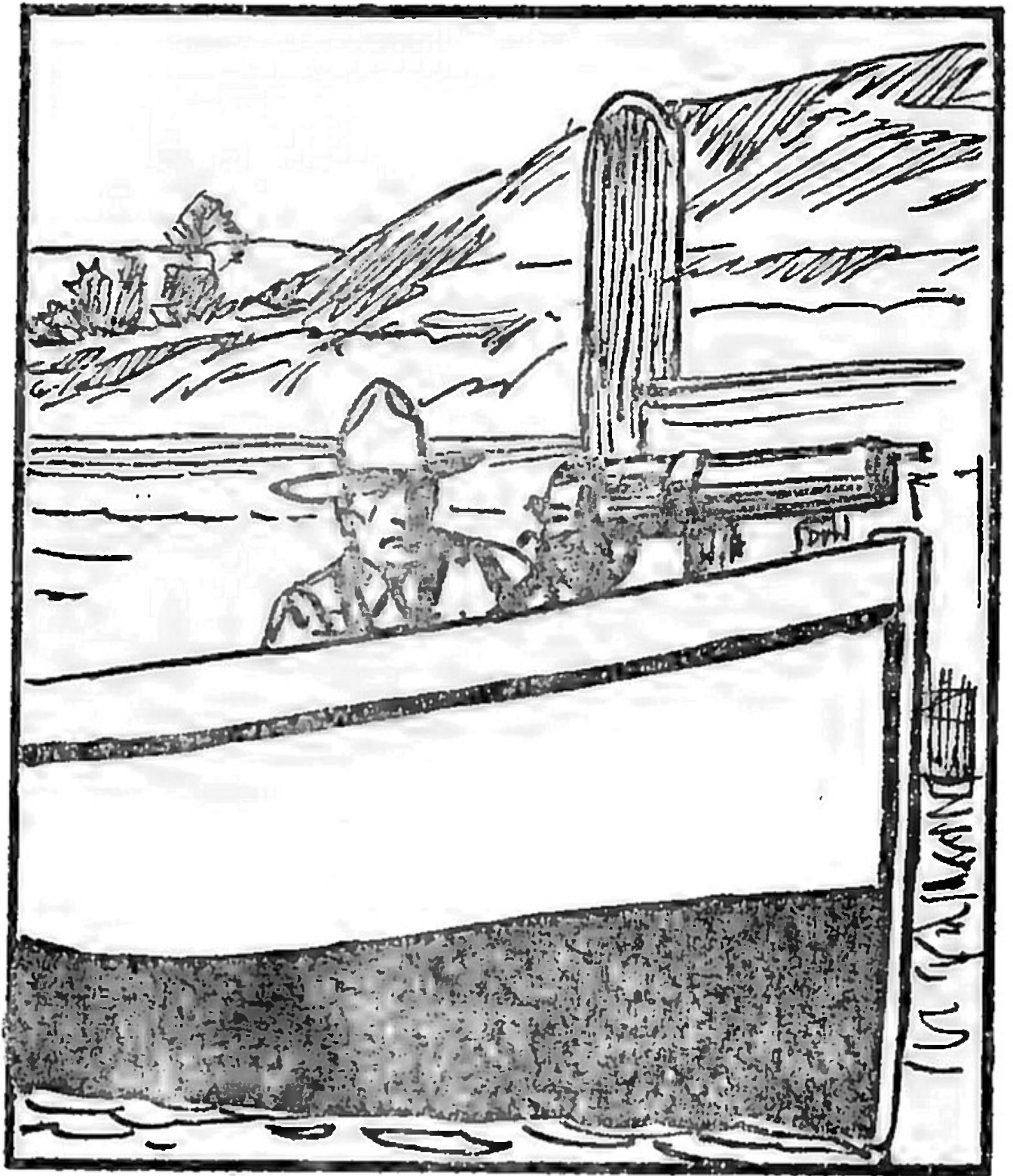


Ann Took Care of the Wounded

larger boat. He eagerly searched the river front for some craft he might use to transport the refugees downstream if he could get possession of it.

He saw that Shorty was still in the launch. Apparently the looters were too busy attacking the consulate to notice him. Mac's eyes followed the smoky river bank.

Suddenly, with an exclamation



Shorty Remained at His Post

of satisfaction, Mac spied a large Chinese junk moored to a wharf not more than a hundred yards above the launch.

“I’m going back to the launch and get that junk,” he called to his men. “Cover me as I cross the compound!”

Returning to the lower floor Mac gave Carson his instructions and placed one of his privates in command of the Marine detail. Ann



“Cover Me as I Cross the Compound!”

Kelly had finished dressing the wounded men and was getting Carson's wife ready for the trip down river. Mac called together the men who were not on duty. Distributing revolvers and ammunition among them, he gave each his instruction. His plan was to swim upstream, cut the junk loose, and work it down to the launch. The minute the junk was ready those in the consulate were to make a



He Distributed Revolvers and Ammunition

dash for the wharf with picked details assigned to drive back the looters while the escape from the consulate was being carried out.



Mac Planned to Swim to the Junk

CHAPTER XI

MAC PLAYS A LONE HAND

As soon as Mac was certain everyone understood the plan of action and the part he or she was to play in its execution, he went to the east gate.

Kicking off his heavy service shoes in preparation for his swim



He Kicked off His Heavy Shoes

to the junk, Mac turned and signaled to his men in the upper part of the consulate.

Under cover of staccato bursts of automatic rifle fire that drove the snipers to cover, Mac made the dash to the wharf without being hit. He jumped into the launch and, running to where Shorty sat propped up behind his machine gun, he quickly explained the plan.

“Good luck, Mac,” Shorty said

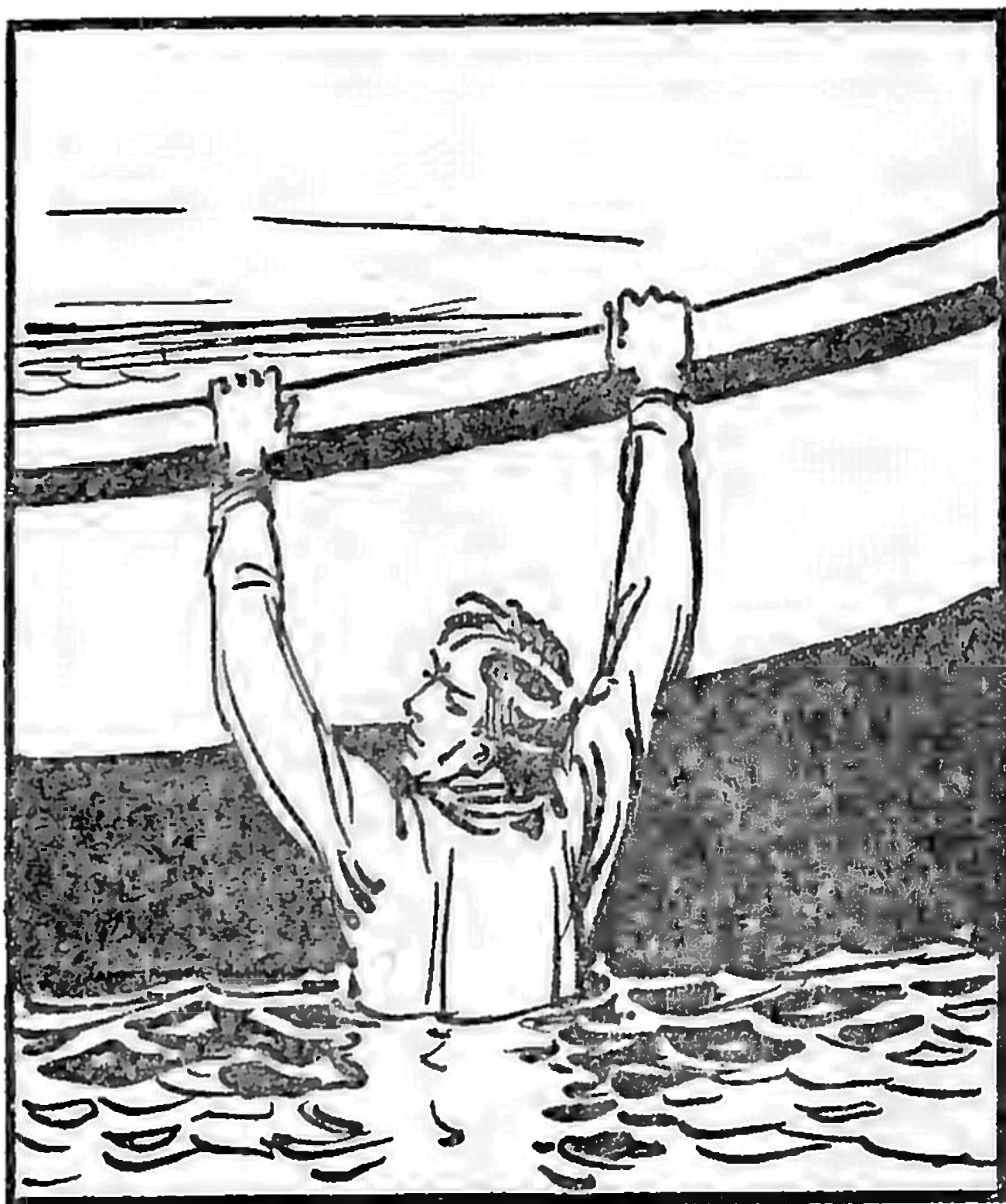


Mac Made the Dash to the Wharf

warmly. "Here's hoping that junk isn't full of river pirates. They cut a mean throat with those big swords, you know."

Mac nodded grimly and slipped over the side of the launch and into the muddy waters of the Liho. In order to avoid attracting attention he worked his way upstream toward the moored junk in a series of under-water dives.

As he drew near the junk it



He Slipped into the Muddy Waters of the Liho

seemed to be deserted, but he could not be sure. He finally reached it without drawing fire from the houses on the bank and crawled aboard on the offshore side.

There was no one on deck. Mac dropped to his hands and knees and crawled toward the bow. He reached the worn hawser without incident, and drawing his knife he cut the bowline. Moving swiftly toward the stern he had nearly

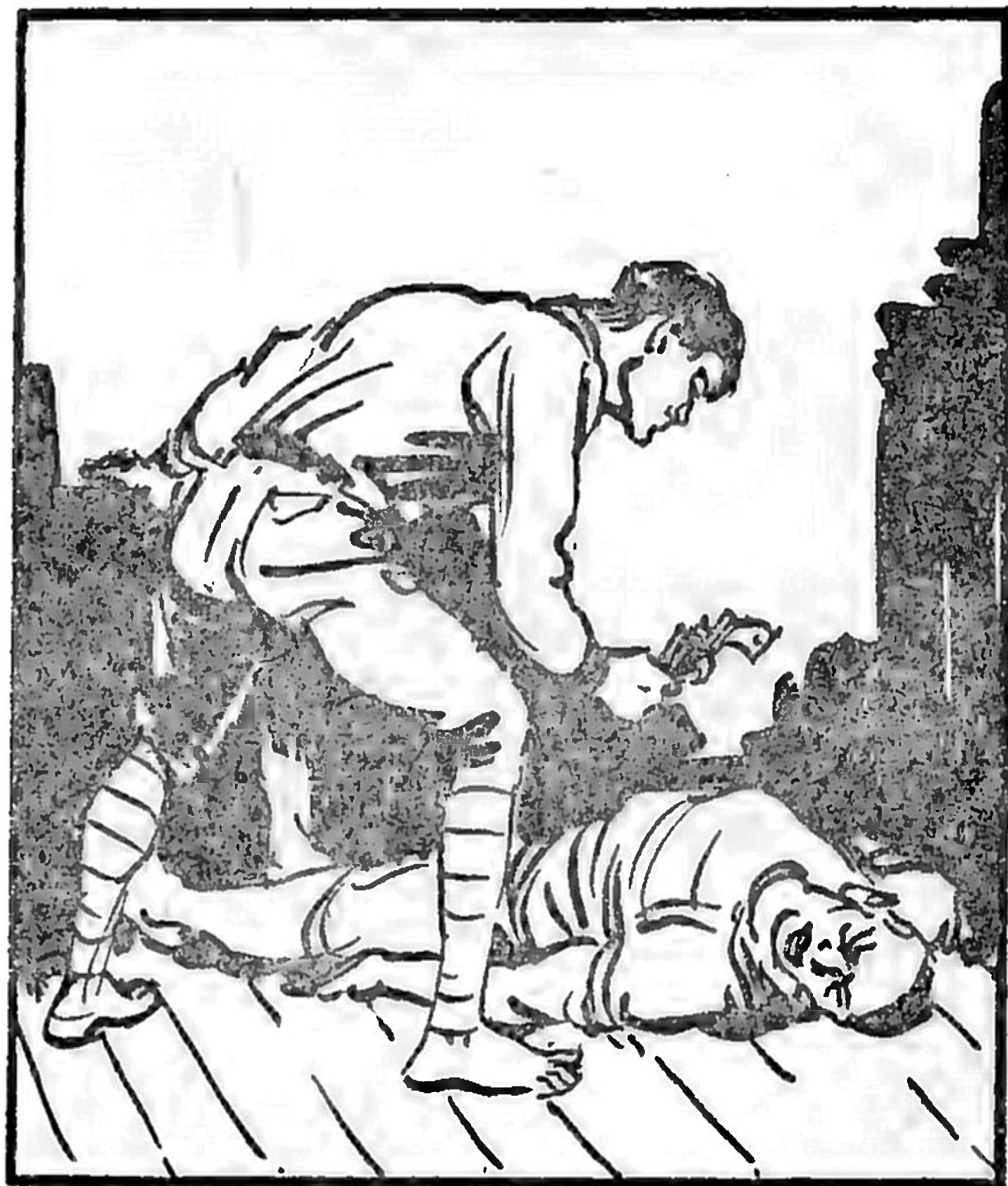


Mac Cut the Bowline

reached the stern rope when a giant Chinaman leaped out of a crude shelter over the afterdeck and rushed at him. In his hand, slashing this way and that, he wielded a long sword.

Mac sidestepped the hissing blade, and, catching his assailant off balance, he flung him to the deck.

Before the man could utter a cry Mac whacked him with the butt of



The Chinaman Went Limp

his service revolver and he went limp.

Mac sprang to his feet, expecting others to rush out of the shelter—but there were no more. Without wasting a moment, he leaped to the remaining hawser and cut it.

The sluggish current of the river began to push the junk away from the wharf. During his swim he had calculated that the current would carry the junk directly down



He Cut the Remaining Hawser

upon the consulate wharf, but a freakish current seemed to be pushing it out into the stream.

Mac knew that the time had come to throw all efforts at concealment to the winds. He picked up a long pole, and, rushing to the offshore side he began to pole with all his might, to hold the junk close to shore.

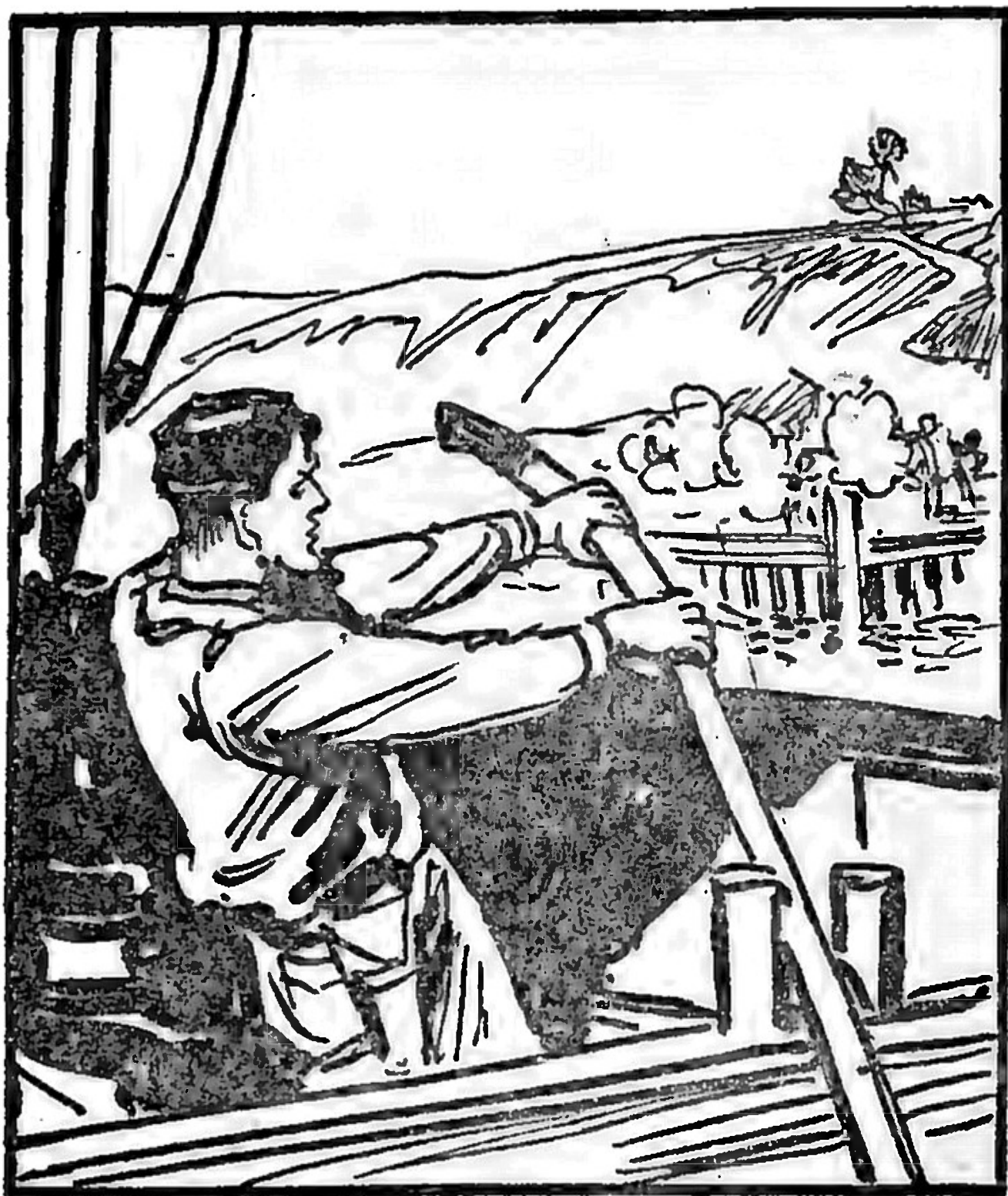
By this time his trick had been discovered. A band of looters



Mac Poled With All His Might

rushed to the wharf behind him and began firing. Again the unbelievably bad shooting of the Chinese outlaws saved him. Bullets struck everywhere but the spot where he was standing.

The progress of the junk was agonizingly slow. Mac knew that every moment counted. The instant the Marines and refugees from the consulate dashed for the wharf, Mac knew that would be the



His Trick Had Been Discovered

signal for a concerted rush on the part of the renegade looters.

Mac had worked the junk half-way down to the consulate wharf when a sudden increase in the firing warned him that the evacuation of the consulate had started.

He was still a good twenty-five yards from the wharf when he saw the women and children, flanked by the Marines and civilians of the consulate, reach the wharf. He



Evacuation of the Consulate Started

could distinctly make out the white uniform of Ann Kelly as she bravely walked beside a stretcher on which lay Carson's young wife.

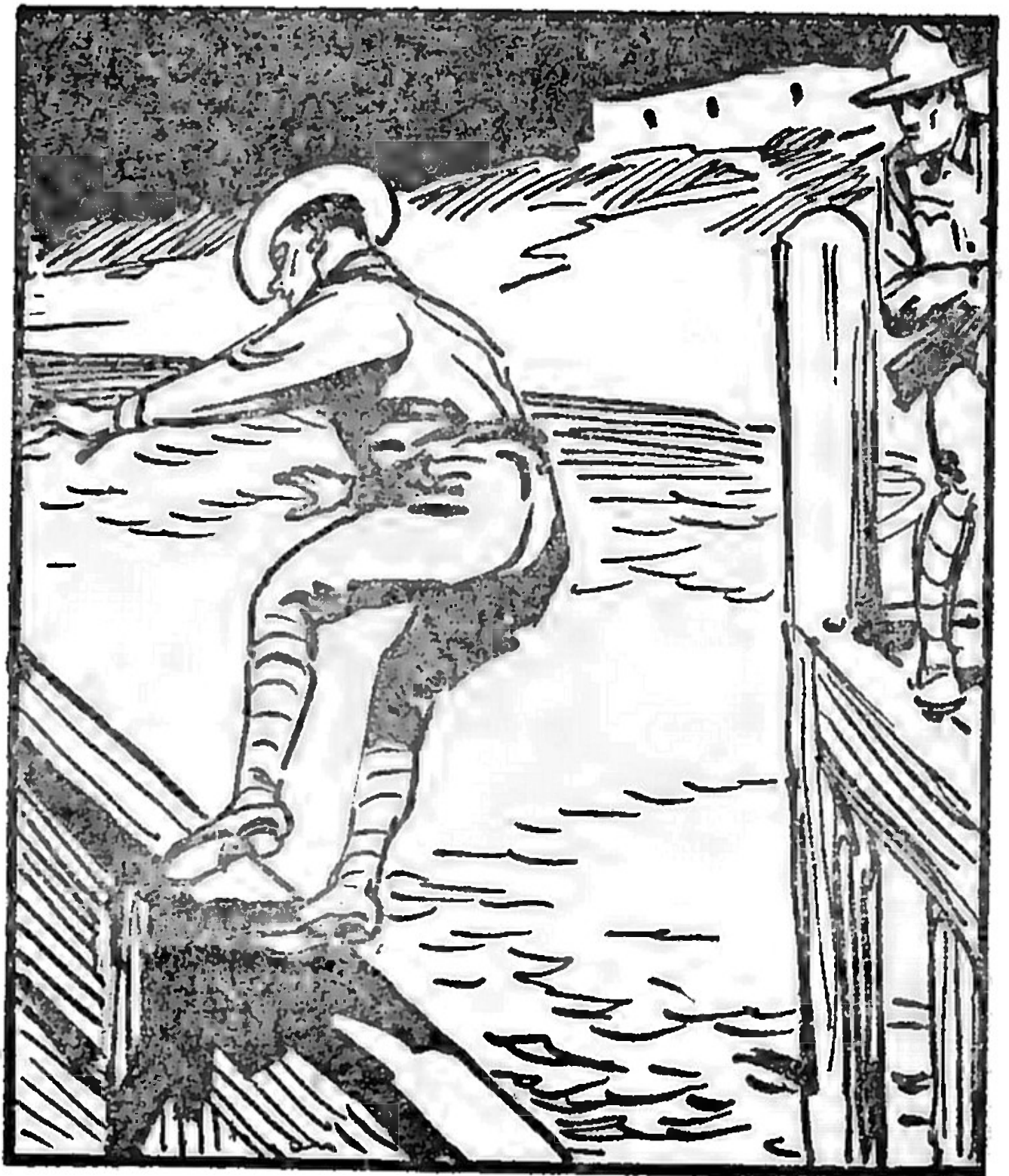
Shorty was up behind his machine gun in the bow of the launch, sending a withering fire into every place that might shelter a sniper. So heavy was the fire that hardly an answering shot came from the attackers. They had been taken completely by surprise.



Shorty Broke Loose With the Machine Gun

Mac poled the clumsy junk with all his might. So far the plan had been successful, but he knew there was not a moment to lose. On the open wharf the refugees would be at the mercy of the renegade looters once they realized what was happening.

At last the junk's bow approached the end of the wharf. A Marine handed his automatic rifle to a civilian refugee, and, taking a run-



The Marine Jumped on the Junk

ning leap, landed on the bow of the junk.

“Piece together a tow line,” Mac yelled. “Make it fast to the stern of the launch while we get these people on board.”

Mac dropped his pole and sprang to the wharf with a short hawser in his hands. He quickly hitched it over a piling and set to work hurrying the women and children into the junk. “Lie down,” he



He Hitched the Hawser Over a Piling

shouted. "Everyone of you lie flat on the deck and don't stand up, no matter what happens!"

No one had to be told twice.

It was the work of a moment to get the refugees aboard the junk and it was none too soon. The snipers were beginning to return the fire of the Marines. Bullets whistled viciously close and thudded into the hull of the junk.

Meanwhile the towline was fin-

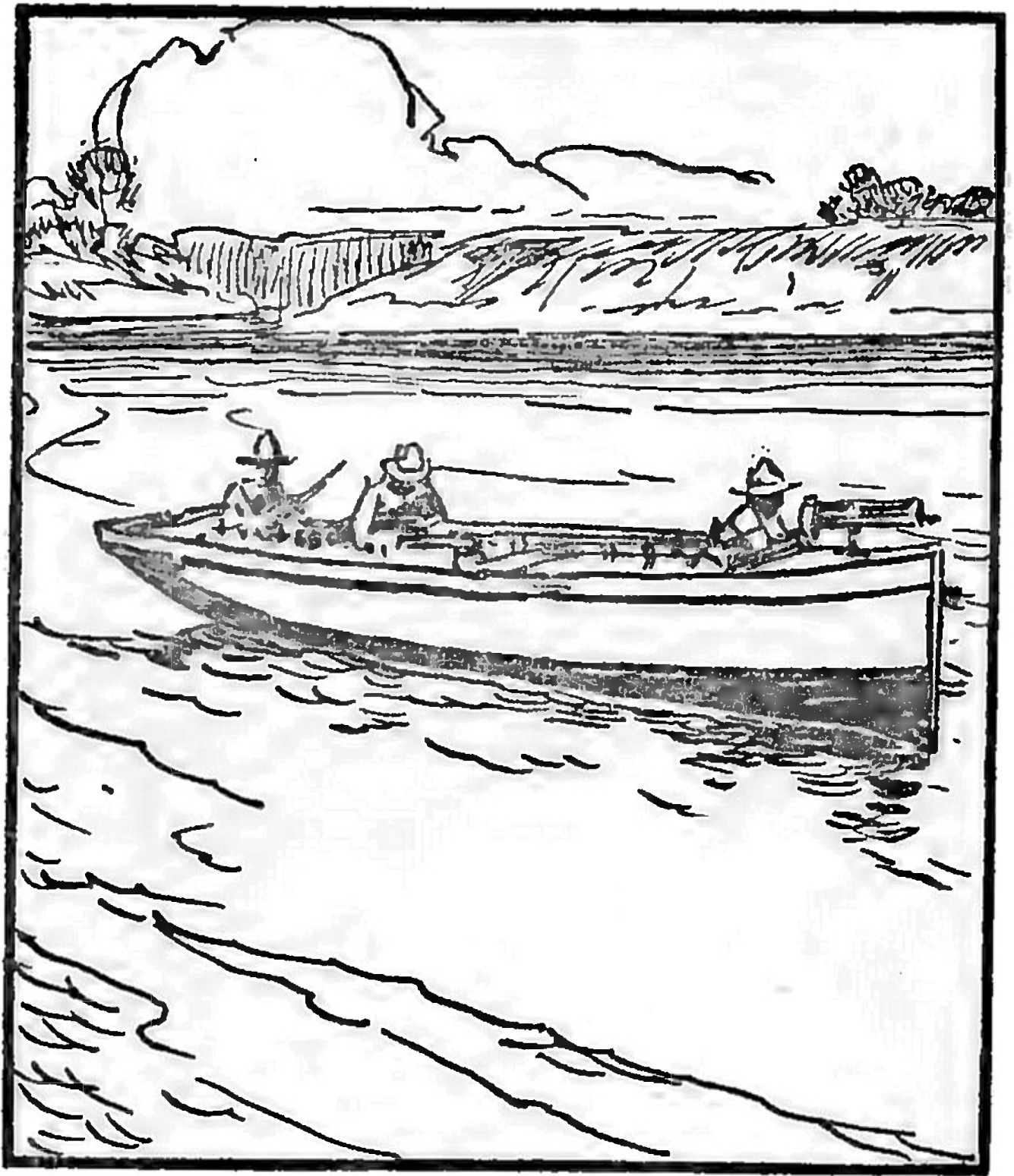


Bullets Whistled Viciously Close

ished and the power launch swung out into the stream. The motor coughed, and then settled down to a welcome throbbing.

According to plan, two Marines joined Shorty and his machine gun in the launch with the helmsman from the gunboat. The others sprang aboard the junk and continued their fire.

The tow line straightened out with a snap—but it held. The bow



The Launch Swung out into the Stream

of the junk swung out into the stream.

“Cut the stern line!” Mac shouted.

A moment later the junk was moving away from the wharf.

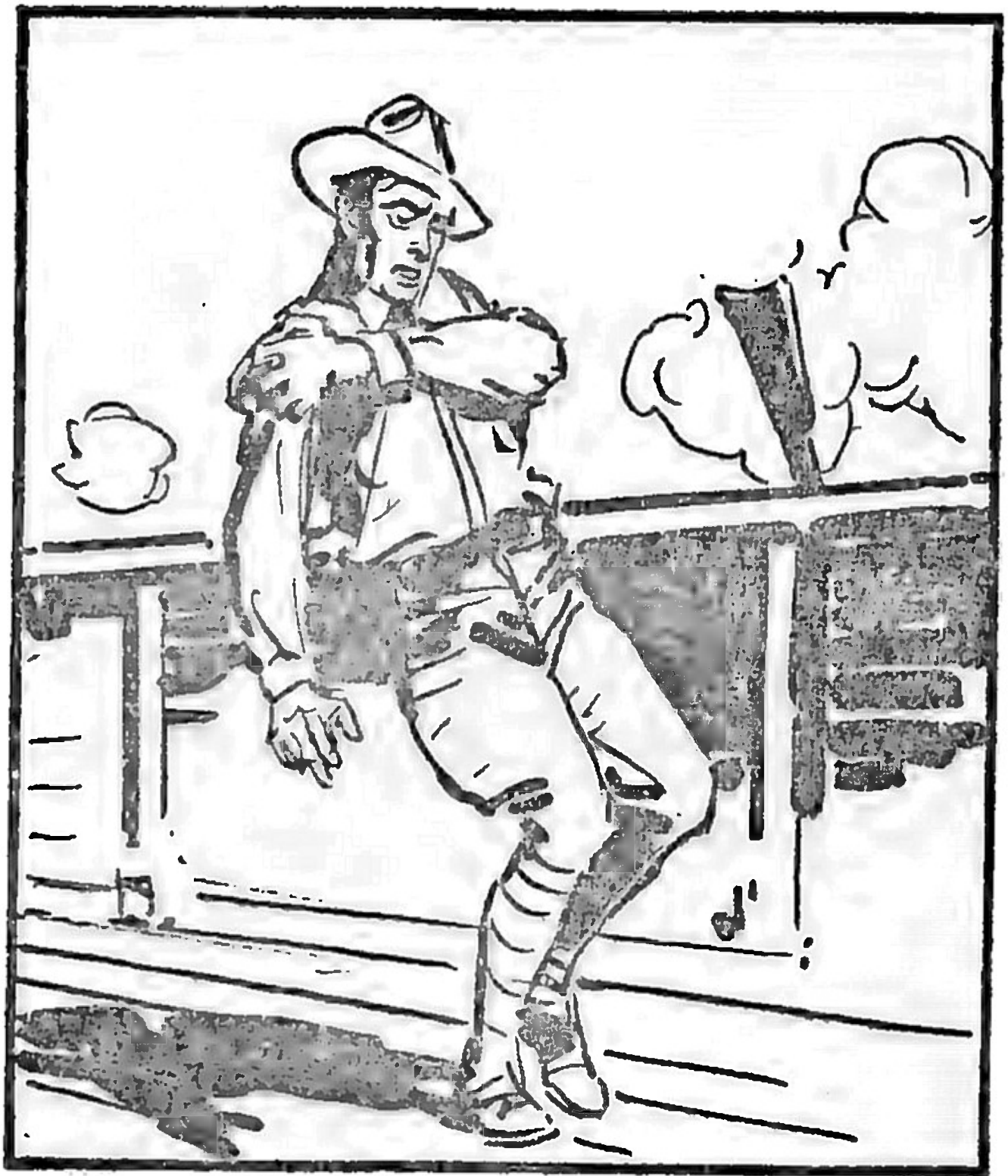


The Marine Cut the Stern Line

CHAPTER XII

SAFE AT LAST?

Tense moments followed as the gunfire from the shore increased. A hail of lead screamed overhead and beat a sickening tattoo on the sides of the junk itself. One of Mac's men reeled backward, clutching his shoulder, and his rifle fell



The Marine Clutched His Shoulder

into the river. But he was the only casualty of the daring evacuation.

Ann Kelly was beside the Marine almost before he fell. Swiftly she tore away his uniform and coolly gave orders to those who hurried to help. A few minutes later the Marine was resting easily.

Meanwhile, the launch and junk had pulled out of range and was moving swiftly downstream. With the gravest danger apparently



Ann Was Immediately Beside Him

over, the refugees began getting up off the deck of the junk but Mac was everywhere at once, forcing them down again.

“You’re not safe yet,” he warned them. “You won’t be really safe until you’re aboard the gunboat!”

As the boats continued downstream Mac made his rounds, checking his casualties and ammunition supply, and posting the remainder of his squad. Ann Kelly



"You're Not Safe Yet."

walked over to him.

“The way you got this junk,” she said and her eyes were shining, “was the bravest thing I’ve ever seen, Sergeant Mac.”

“You’ve been pretty swell yourself, Miss Kelly,” he shot back with a grin.

“After what we’ve been through together,” she cut in, “don’t you think we might drop some of the formality . . . Mac?”



"It Was the Bravest Thing I've Ever Seen."

“Okay, Ann,” Mac laughed and held out his hand. “I take back everything I said about dangerous spots being no place for a woman. My men owe a great deal to you, and I don’t know what I’d have done without you to take care of them.”

For half an hour the strange convoy moved steadily downstream toward the safety of the armored gunboat, without incident. No



"I Take Back Everything I Said."

crack of sniping rifles came from the shore. Even the pirate craft they had encountered on the way up was nowhere to be seen.

“Another half hour and we’ll be at the blockade. We can transfer these people to the gunboat, if all goes well,” Mac said.

But even as he spoke he kept his eyes peeled for trouble.

“I’ve got to go back and stay with Mrs. Carson,” Ann said regret-



The Launch Pulled the Junk Steadily Upstream

fully. "She's very ill and the sooner we get her to a hospital in Shanghai the better."

Mac watched Ann go, pausing here and there to comfort and console the children. Her very presence seemed to reassure them.

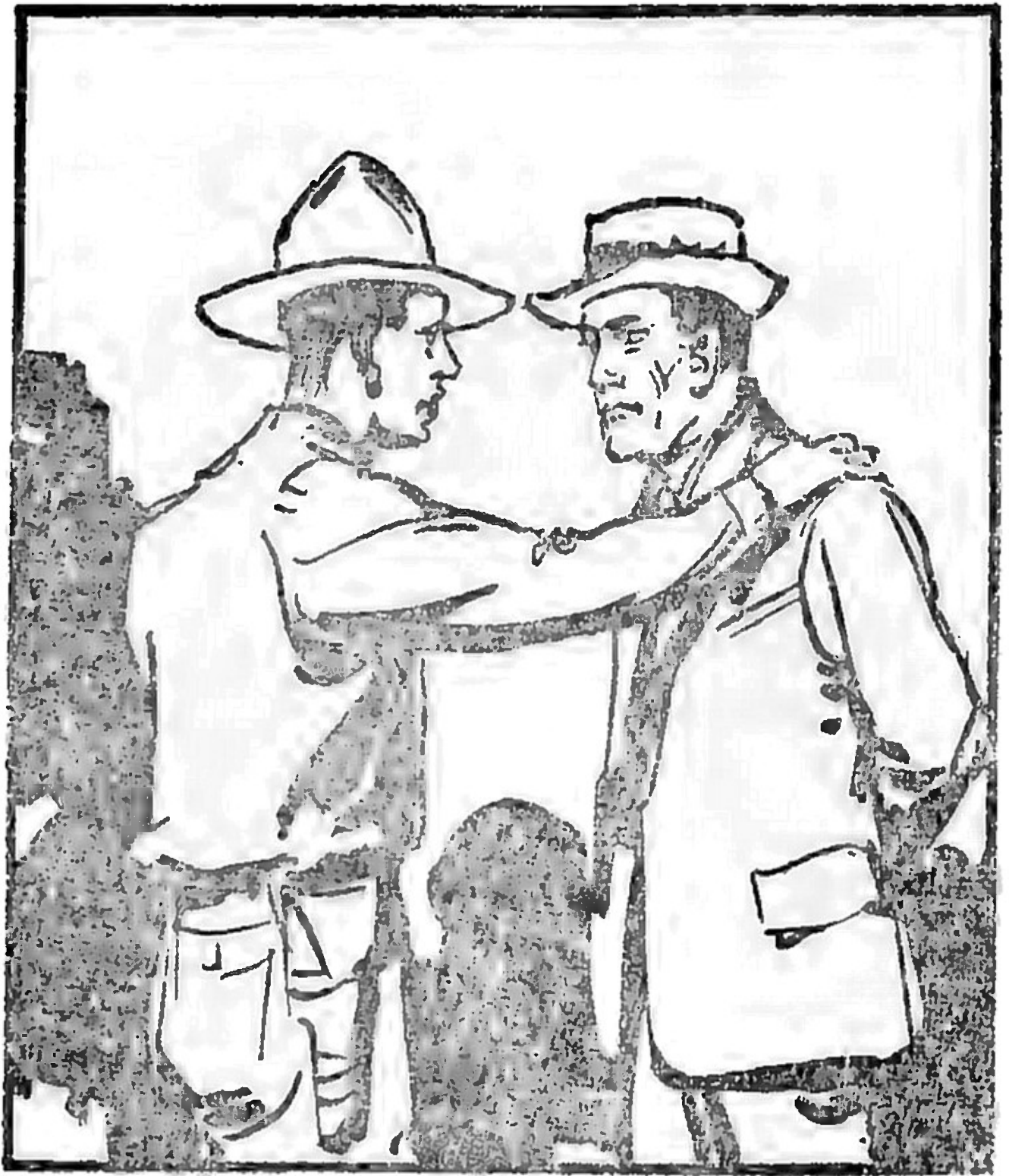
"It looks like the worst is over," the consul said, as Mac passed him. "I haven't had a chance to thank you for getting us out of a tight spot. If I'd listened to your advice



Her Very Presence Seemed to Reassure Them

when you carried those dispatches to Shanghai this might not have happened.”

“Forget it, Mr. Carson,” Mac said gruffly. “With conditions the way they are in China today no one can say what’s best. You had no way of knowing the looters would take advantage of the regular troops being at the Shanghai front fighting the Japs. I was only guessing they would cut loose and



"Forget It, Mr. Carson."

it turned out I was right. I might just as easily have been wrong.”

“All local police authority broke down the day after you left for Shanghai. We got our message through to Shanghai just in time, because they destroyed our radio equipment before we could get a reply,” Carson explained.

“Well, that’s over now,” Mac said kindly, for he knew the Saung Consulate had been Carson’s first



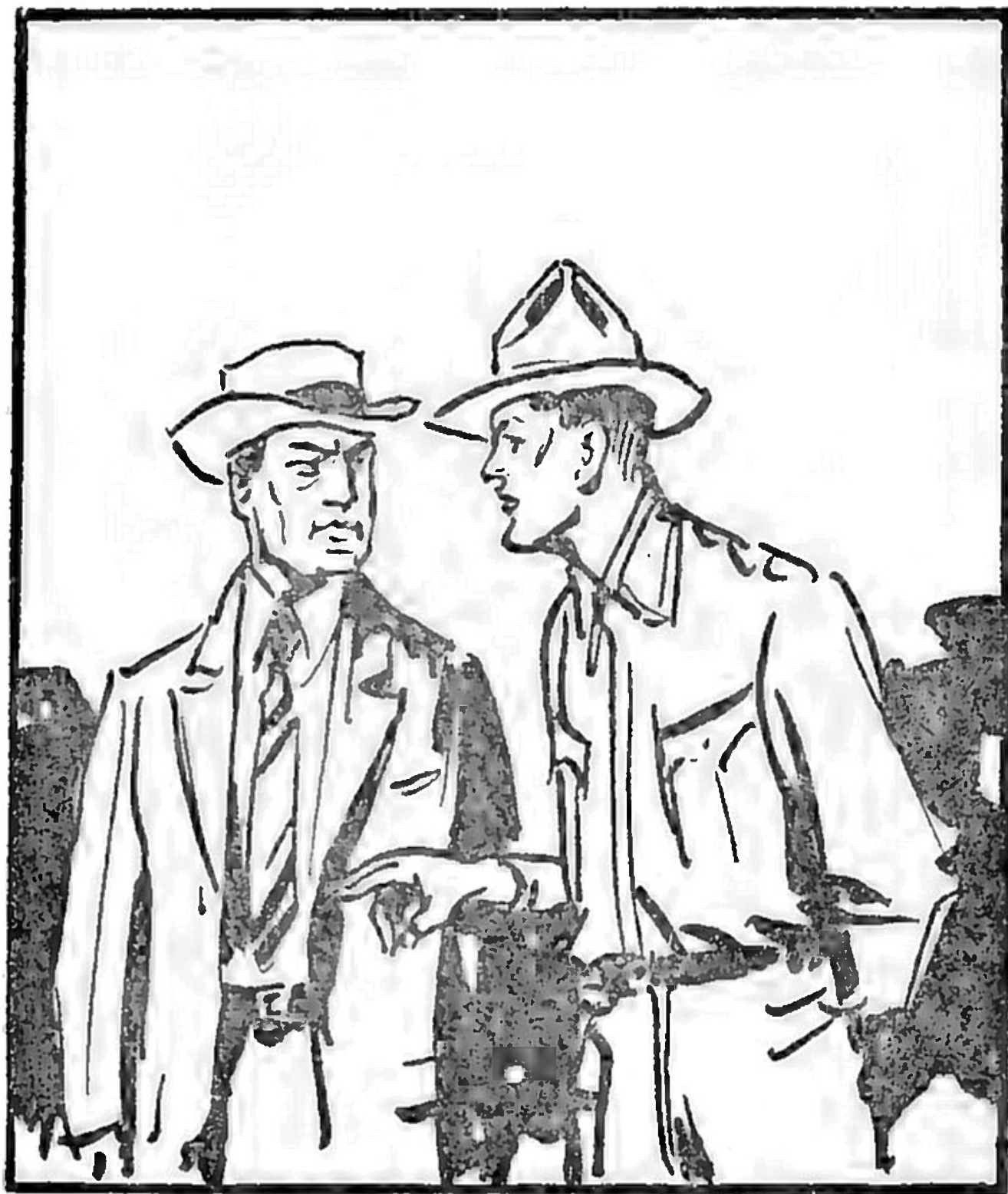
The Looters Took Advantage of the Situation

assignment. "When you make out your report don't mention that I warned you to get out. After all, it's not the business of the Marines to tell the Consular Service what to do."

"Thanks, Sergeant," Carson said quickly.

"Better go over and sit by your wife," Mac suggested and continued his rounds.

As the minutes passed and the



“Don’t Mention That I Warned You.”

boats continued on downstream, Mac began to grow uneasy. Things were quiet—too quiet. Not a sniper had fired at the boats in the past fifteen minutes. There had been snipers all along the river on the trip up. Now they were gone. Mac wondered why. He scanned the shoreline for the answer, but found none.

The countryside seemed utterly deserted. There was no sign of a



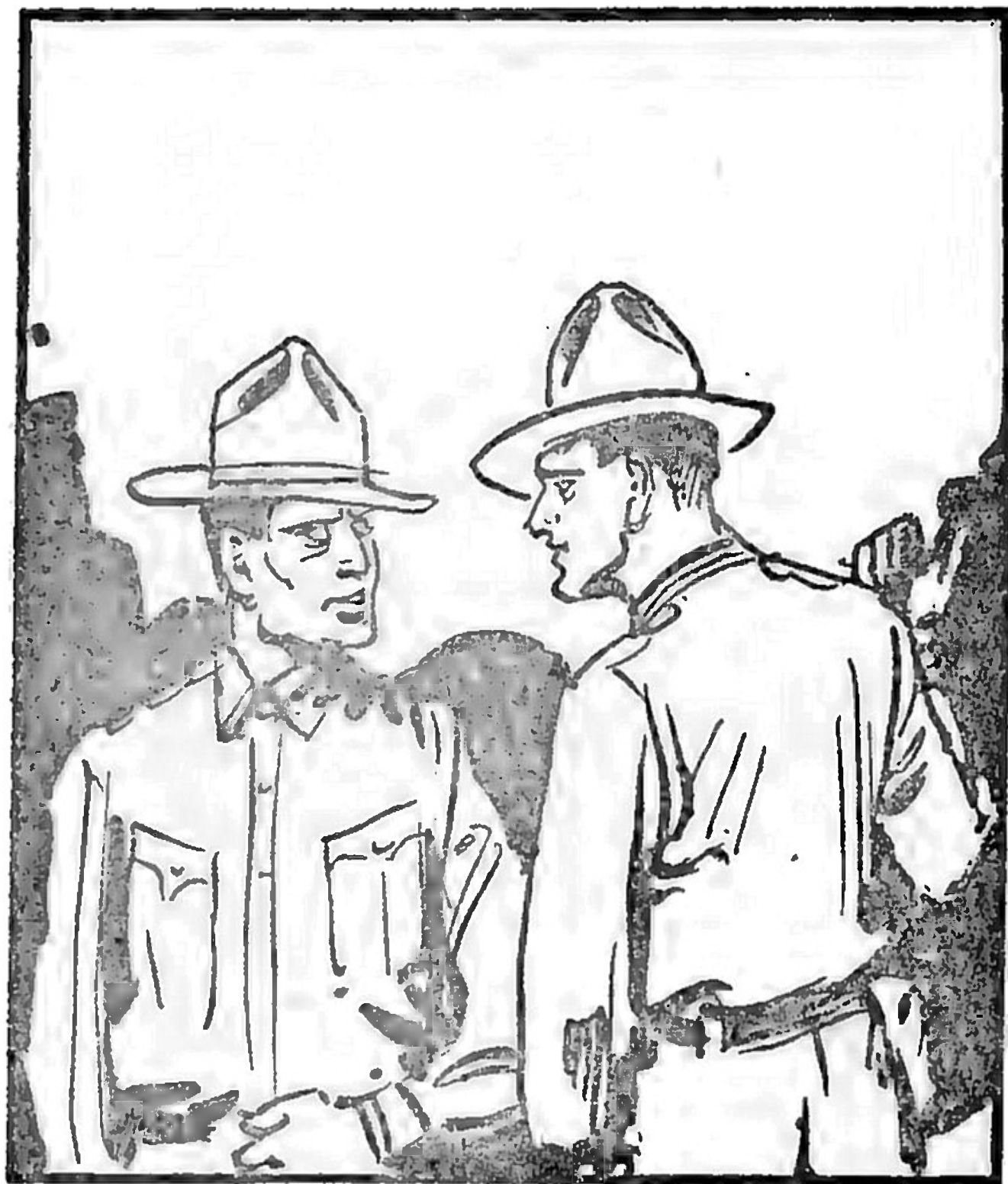
Mac Began to Grew Uneasy

living human being in the two or three small villages they passed.

“Mighty quiet for a change,” Private Hannan remarked as Mac approached his station in the bow of the junk.

“Too much so,” Mac replied grimly. “Something is happening or has happened along the river since we came up, and I wish I knew what it is.”

Mac got his answer a moment



“Mighty Quiet for a Change.”

later as the boats rounded a bend in the Liho.

A thundering roar greeted their appearance and the water around the power launch was churned by exploding shells.

“Artillery!” Mac exclaimed. Cupping his hands, he yelled to the launch, “Come about and pull upstream around the bend!”



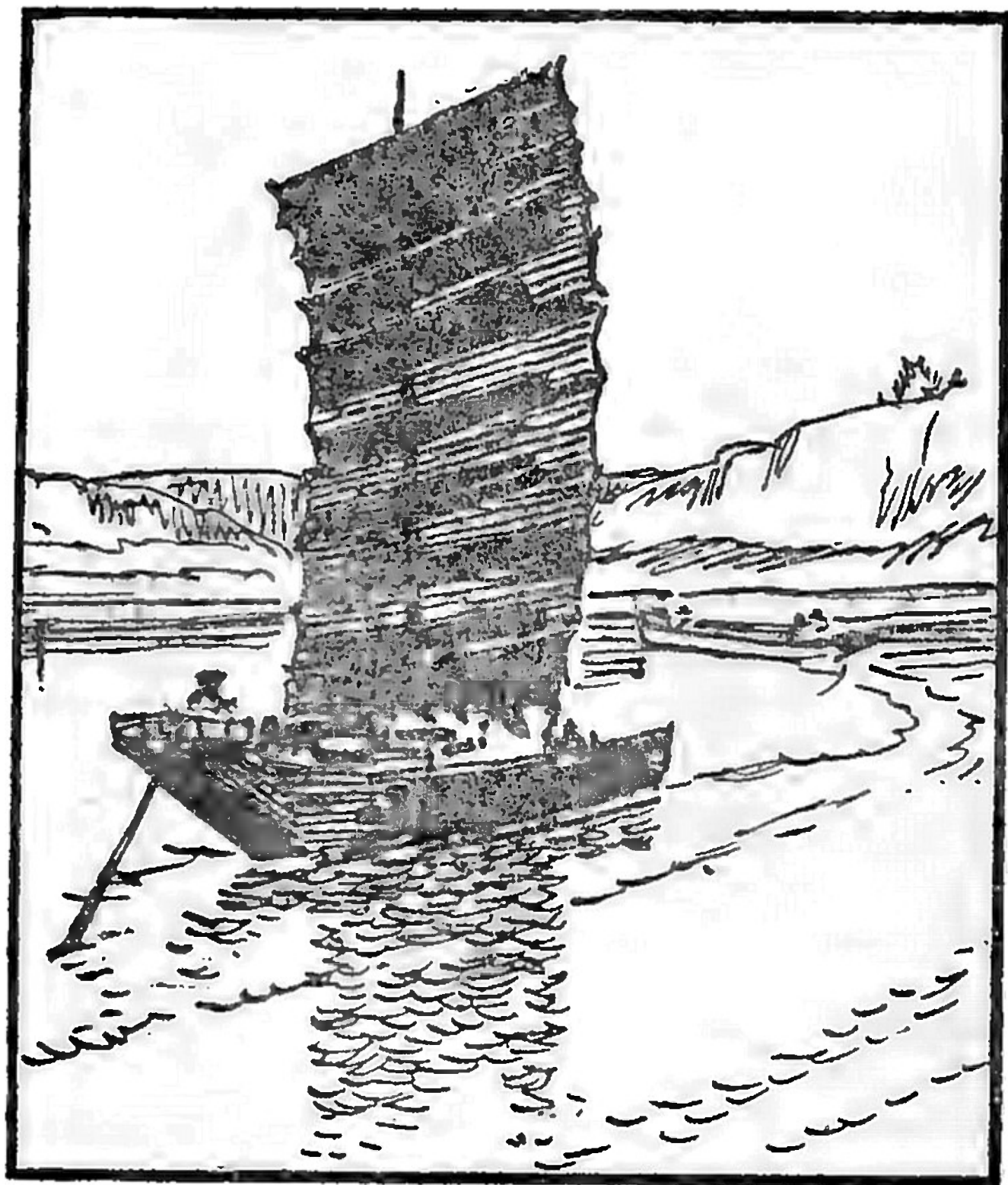
"Come About!" Mac Yelled

CHAPTER XIII

DANGER AT THE RIVER BEND

A second round of artillery shells churned the water close to the launch and junk before Mac's orders could be carried out.

"That's the answer," Mac said grimly when at last they pulled back around the bend and out of



They Turned Back Around the Bend

range. "Chinese regulars have taken over this section and they've mistaken us for river pirates or Japs."

"No wonder," the private cried out and pointed to the stern of the launch.

Mac glanced in the direction the man pointed.

The American flag was gone!

"What happened to the flag?"

Mac called.



The Private Pointed to the Stern

“The snipers got it as we were pulling away from Saung,” Shorty called back.

Without a word Mac bent over and quickly removed his shoes for the second time that day.

“You better do the same and come along,” he ordered the private. “We’ve got to get to the commander of that battery and explain the situation before they sink us. If two of us go, one of us may get



“You Had Better Come Along.”

close enough to explain.”

Once more Mac plunged into the muddy waters of the Liho and struck out for shore.

Without a moment's hesitation, Private Hannan unlaced his boots and dived in after him.

Silently, and as quickly as their water-soaked uniforms allowed them to, the two Americans made their way through the turbid waters of the Liho.



The Men Swam Toward Shore

They reached the high banks of the east shore without being shot at, and immediately began to work their way through the underbrush that concealed the artillery unit around the bend.

With their uniforms soaking wet and caked with mud, Mac and Private Hannan worked their way cautiously through the high grass and thickets. Mac knew only too well the Chinese soldiers' habit of



They Worked Their Way Cautiously

shooting first and asking questions afterward.

“We’ve got to be on the lookout for a patrol,” Mac warned the private.

He felt certain that whoever was in command of the artillery battery that had fired on them would send soldiers upriver to see what had happened to the junk and launch.

A few minutes later Mac held up



They Waited in the Tall Grass

his hand as a signal to Private Hannan. Just ahead of them and close to the river bank a detachment of Chinese soldiers in nondescript uniforms were approaching noisily.

Mac guessed from their appearance and lack of discipline that they were troops of the provincial governor and not from the divisions of the Central Government.

Mac waited until the soldiers



A Group of Soldiers Approached Noisily

were within a dozen yards of their hiding place before he stood up and, raising his arms, called out in his best Chinese dialect:

“You have fired on an American boat carrying refugees from the town of Saung!”

A dozen rifles were raised, and for an instant Mac thought his number was up. But an officer cried out a command and the soldiers lowered their arms.



A Dozen Rifles Were Raised

Mac lowered his arms slowly and advanced to meet the man who seemed to be in command, although his uniform was no different from the rest. The soldiers held their guns in readiness and eyed his mud-caked uniform with suspicion.

“How do we know you are not spies of the Japanese?” the officer demanded.

“I am Sergeant MacLain of the



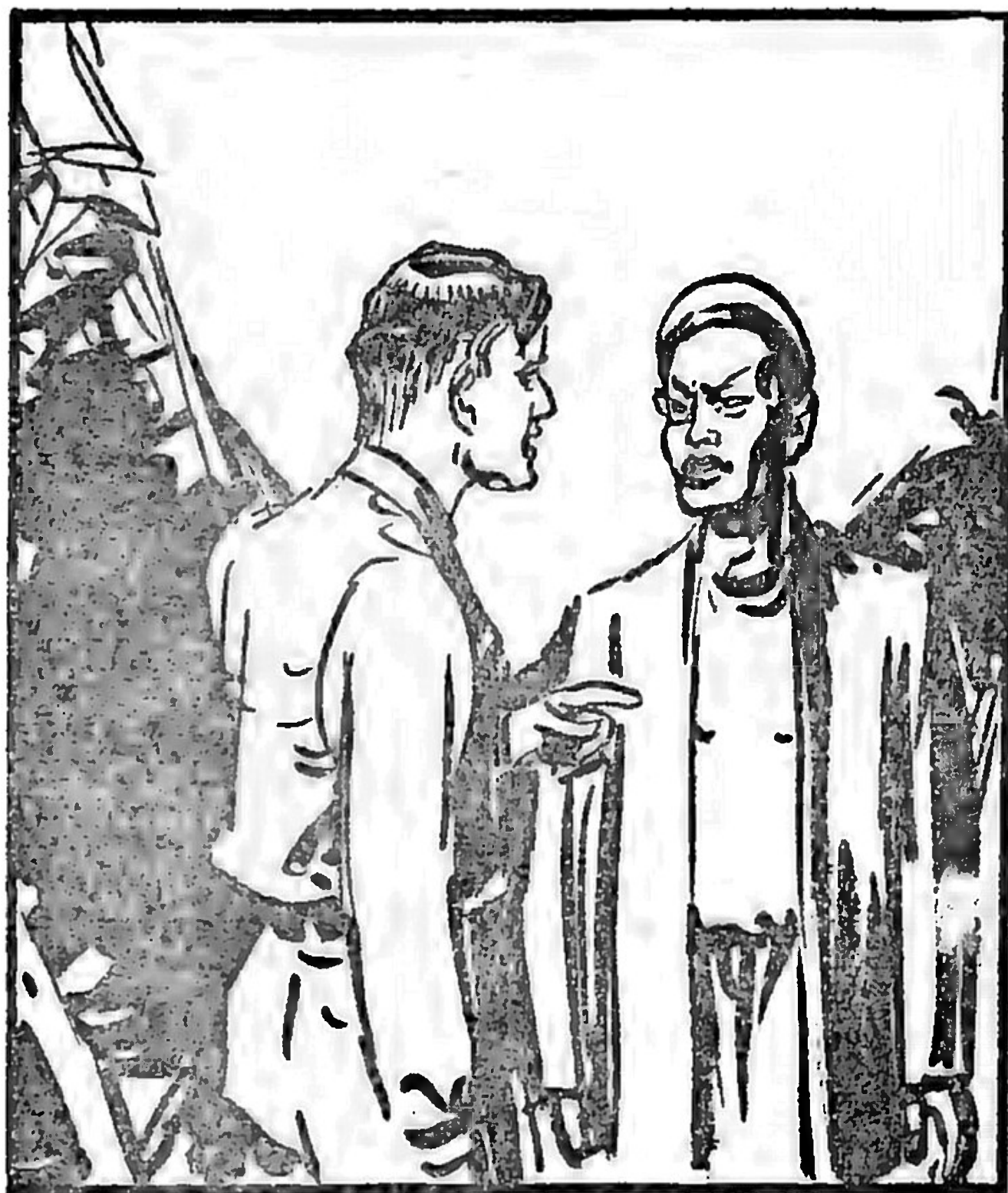
Mac Explained to the Officer

United States Marine Corps station at the International Settlement at Shanghai," Mac explained.

The officer took this explanation with some doubt.

"If that is true, why are you here on the Liho River?" was the next question.

"I have been detailed to evacuate the Americans at Saung," Mac answered. "We are on our way down to the Yangtze to board an



The Officer Looked at Him Doubtfully

American gunboat which could not come up the Liho because of the junks which your troops scuttled at the mouth of the river," Mac explained patiently.

"Why does not your boat carry an American flag if this is so?" the Chinese Officer demanded.

The Oriental's manner was still hostile and suspicious.

"Because," Mac went on, struggling to keep his temper, "the loot-

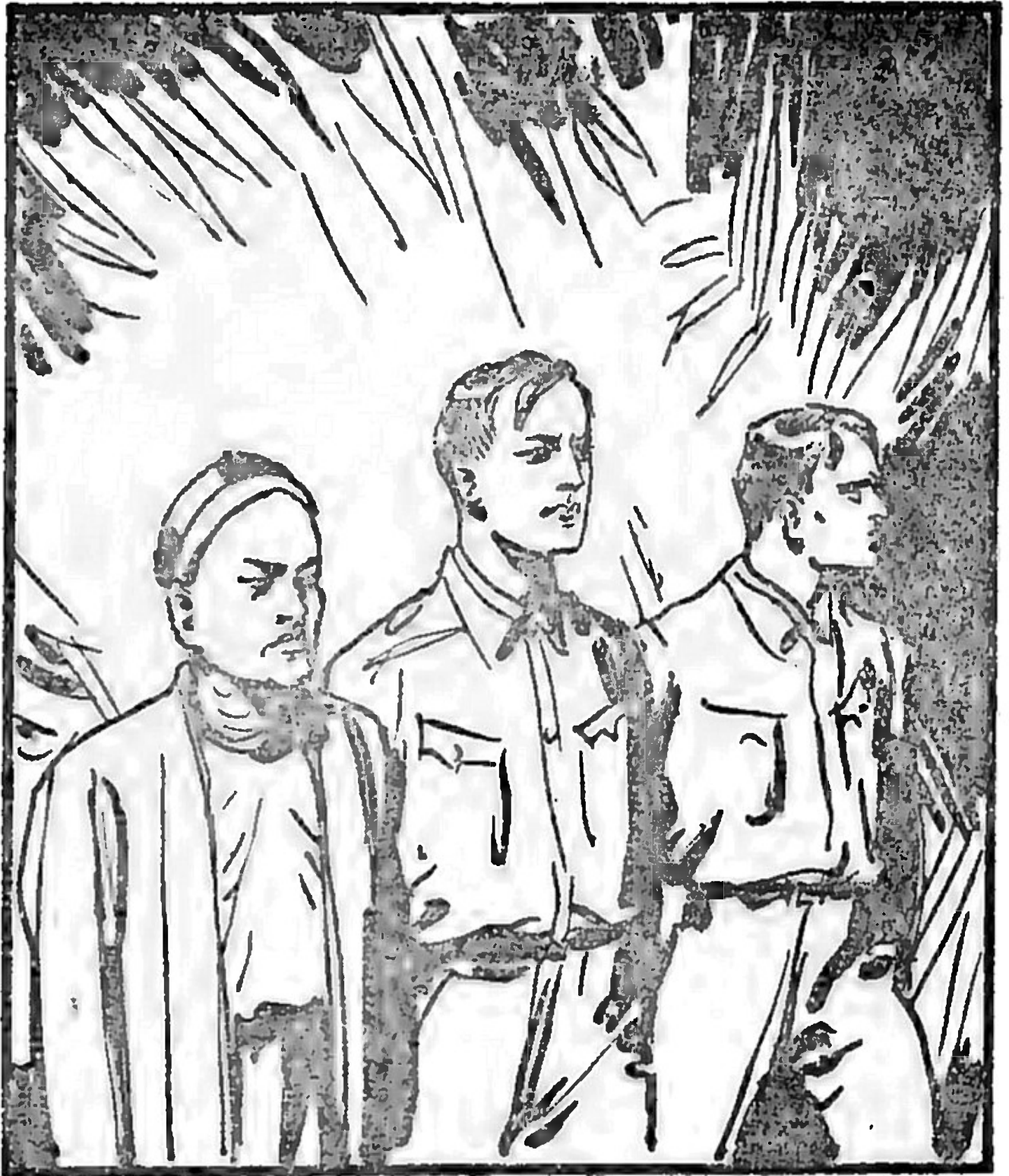


"The Looters Shot the Flag From Its Staff."

ers and snipers at Saung shot the flag from its staff."

"Maybe you speak the truth. We are told Americans are our friends," the officer admitted. "You will come to my superior officer and tell him the things you have told me and he shall see what is to be done."

Mac and Private Hannan had no choice but to accompany the soldiers downstream. Rounding



Mac and Private Hannan Had No Choice

the bend they came upon a larger body of troops and a battery of four antiquated artillery pieces. Mac looked at the guns and wondered how they had ever managed to come so close to hitting the launch.

A small, fat Oriental in a real officer's uniform came forward and listened to the explanations of his subordinate.

Suddenly a grin spread over his



Mac Saw Antiquated Artillery

round face and he bowed apologetically.

“So sorry,” he said in halting English. “We make very bad mistake. So sorry.”

“That’s all right,” Mac replied with relief. “There’s been no real damage done and the mistake was only natural. We carry no flag. But now,” Mac continued, “we are anxious to get the American refugees down to the Yangtze and



"We Make Very Bad Mistake."

aboard the gunboat.”

“Most certainly you may proceed,” the officer in command replied.

He turned and barked out a command. A small boat was shoved into the water.

“My men will take you back to your boat. So sorry for the delay.”

“Allow me to compliment you on your artillery fire. Another round



The Chinese Officer Helped Them

and you'd have blown us out of the water," Mac said as he took his leave.

The Chinese officer bowed low and smiled.

"Thank you, thank you, but fortunately we did not have another round. There has been much fighting and we are now without ammunition."

Mac struggled to suppress a smile as he shook hands and step-



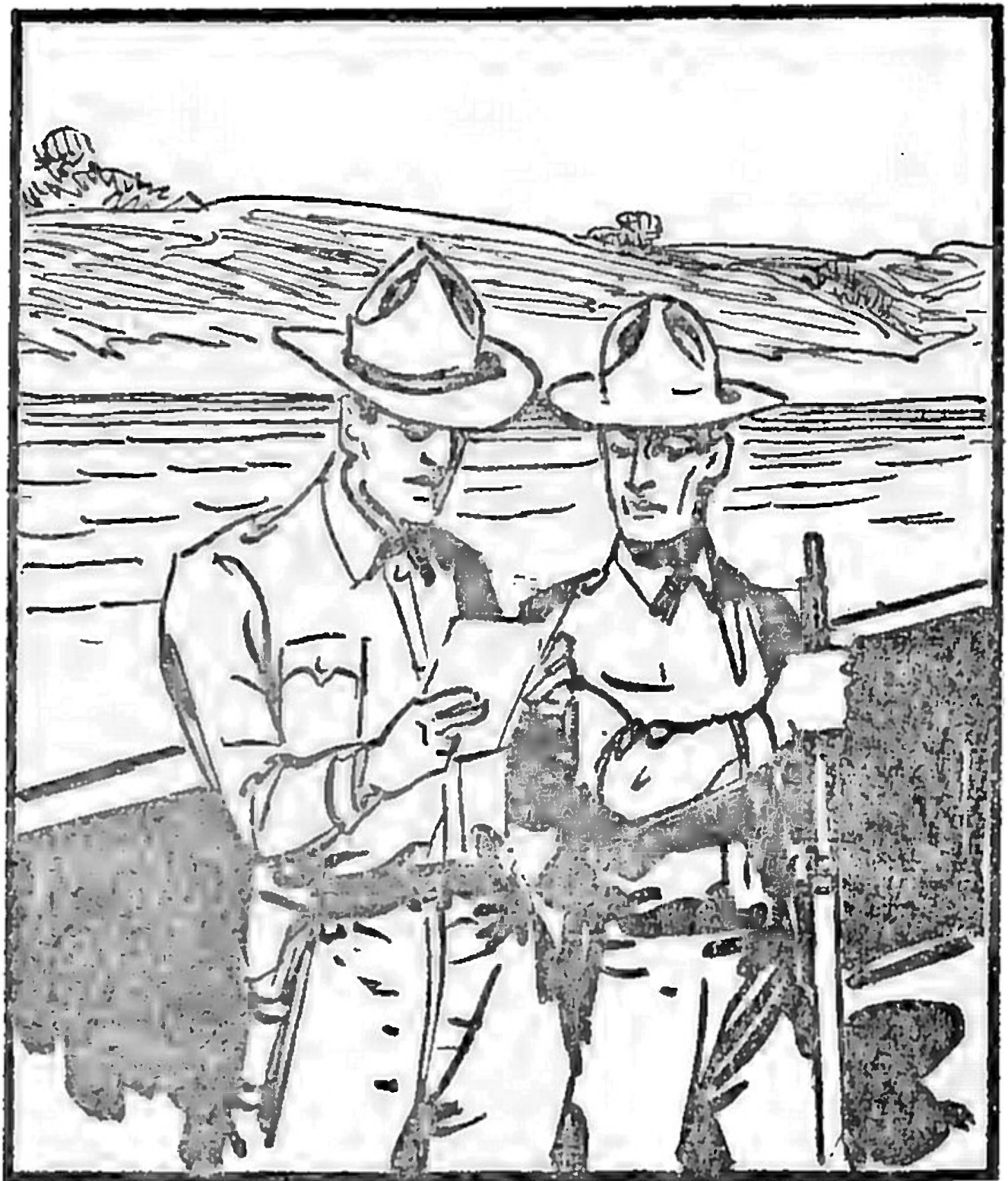
Mac Struggled to Suppress a Smile

ped into the boat. This was indeed a strange war.

A few minutes later he was again aboard the commandeered junk, and the last leg of the hazardous journey began.

According to information he had received from the Chinese commander his present position was only five miles from the junction of the Liho and the Yangtze.

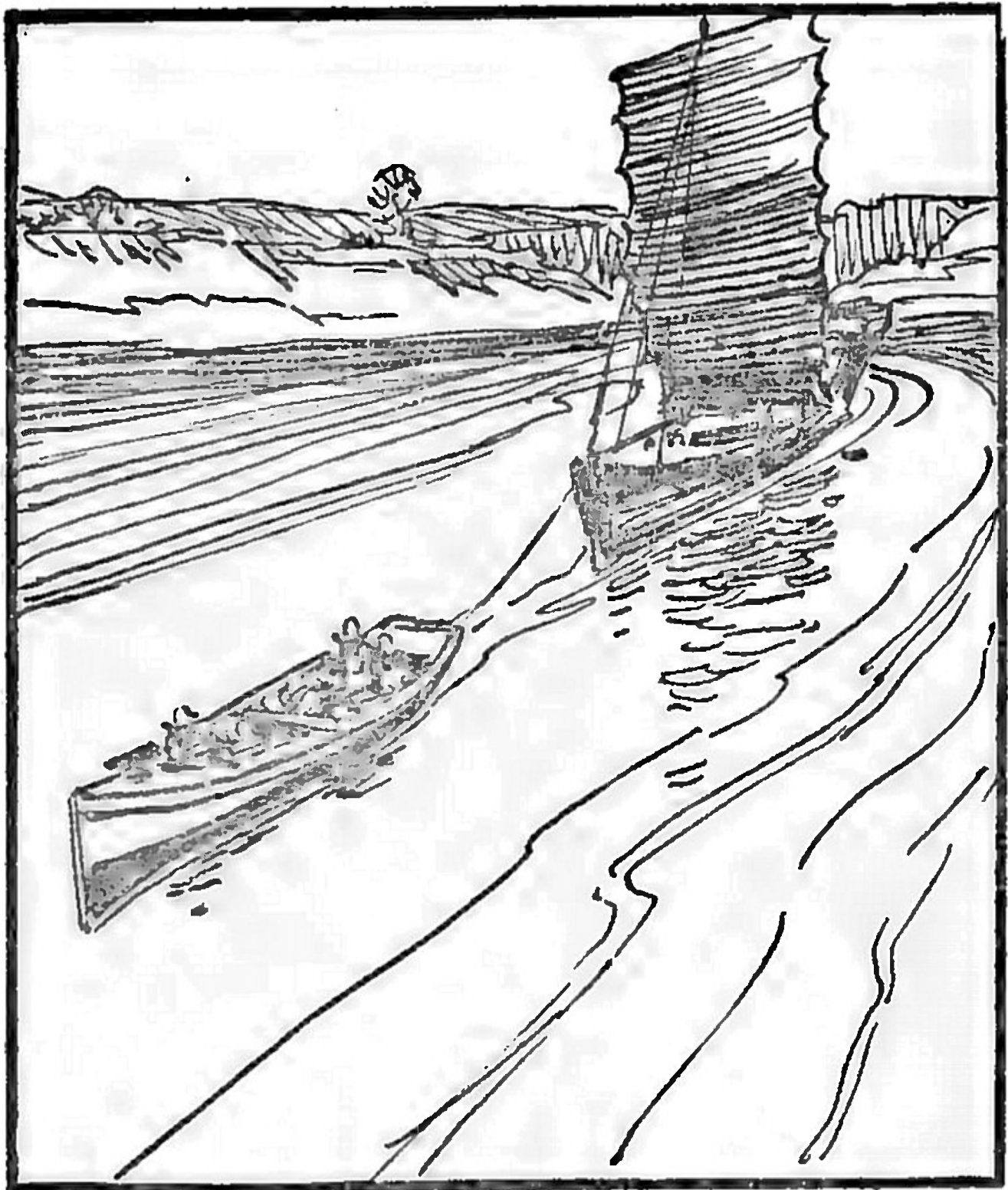
As the launch and junk moved



The Last Leg of the Journey Began

steadily downstream Mac began to breathe easier. It began to look like clear sailing the rest of the way, and once below decks on the gunboat the refugees would be comparatively safe.

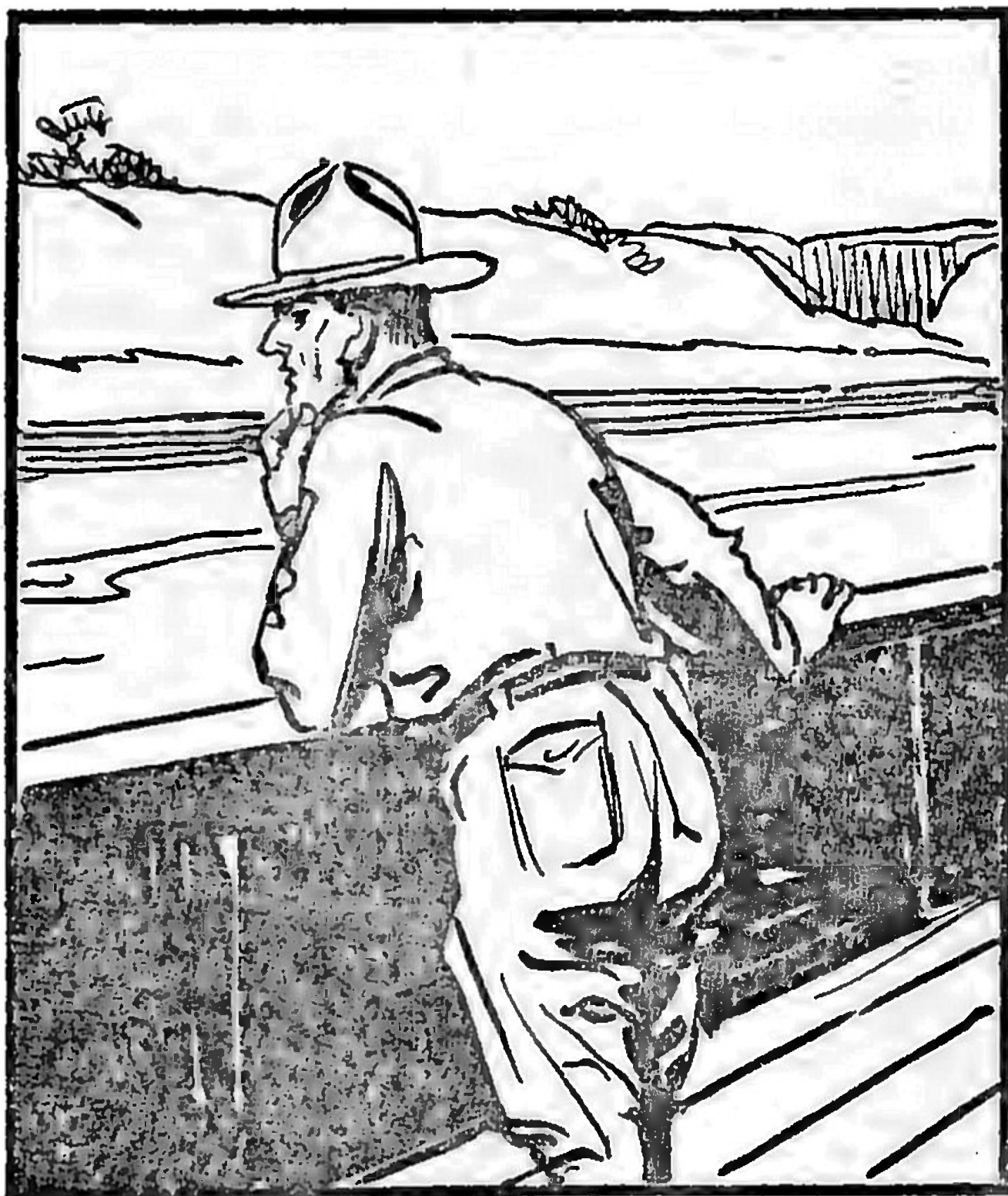
Unfortunately Mac overlooked one factor that should have been uppermost in his mind. The Chinese troops had mistaken his men for Japs, and there was no reason why the Japs might not



It Began to Look Like Clear Sailing

mistake them for Chinese.

Almost within sight of the gunboat this very thing occurred, and it came so suddenly that Mac was caught totally unprepared.



Mac Scanned the Shoreline

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CHAPTER XIV

THE SKY HAWKS STRIKE!

At first they were mere specks in the sky. They were flying high, in a wide "V" formation.

"A Japanese bombing squadron," Mac muttered.

"They're headed this way," Ann Kelly said quietly.



A New Danger Confronted Them

She had come up behind Mac and was standing by his side.

Mac nodded grimly. Cupping his hands, he called to the helmsman of the motor launch.

“Steer over to the east bank of the river and hug the shore as close as you dare without running aground.”

He waved toward the east and pointed.

The launch pilot took one look

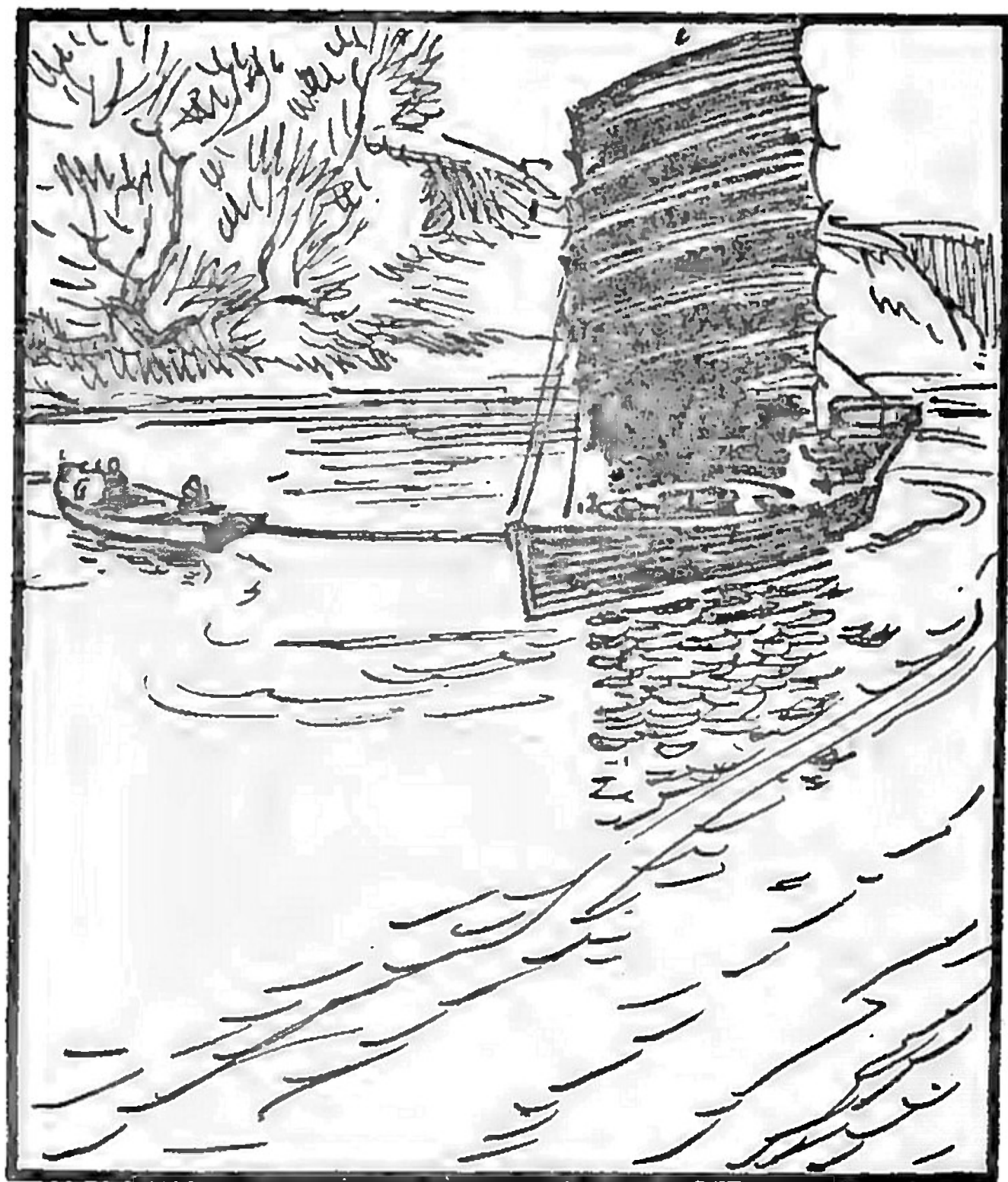


“Hug the Shore as Close as You Dare.”

and swung the launch over hard. The heavy junk turned slowly and began to edge out of midstream toward shore.

By this time the specks in the sky took on the appearance of a flock of wild geese in flight. The drone of their powerful motors could be heard plainly now, a throbbing menace.

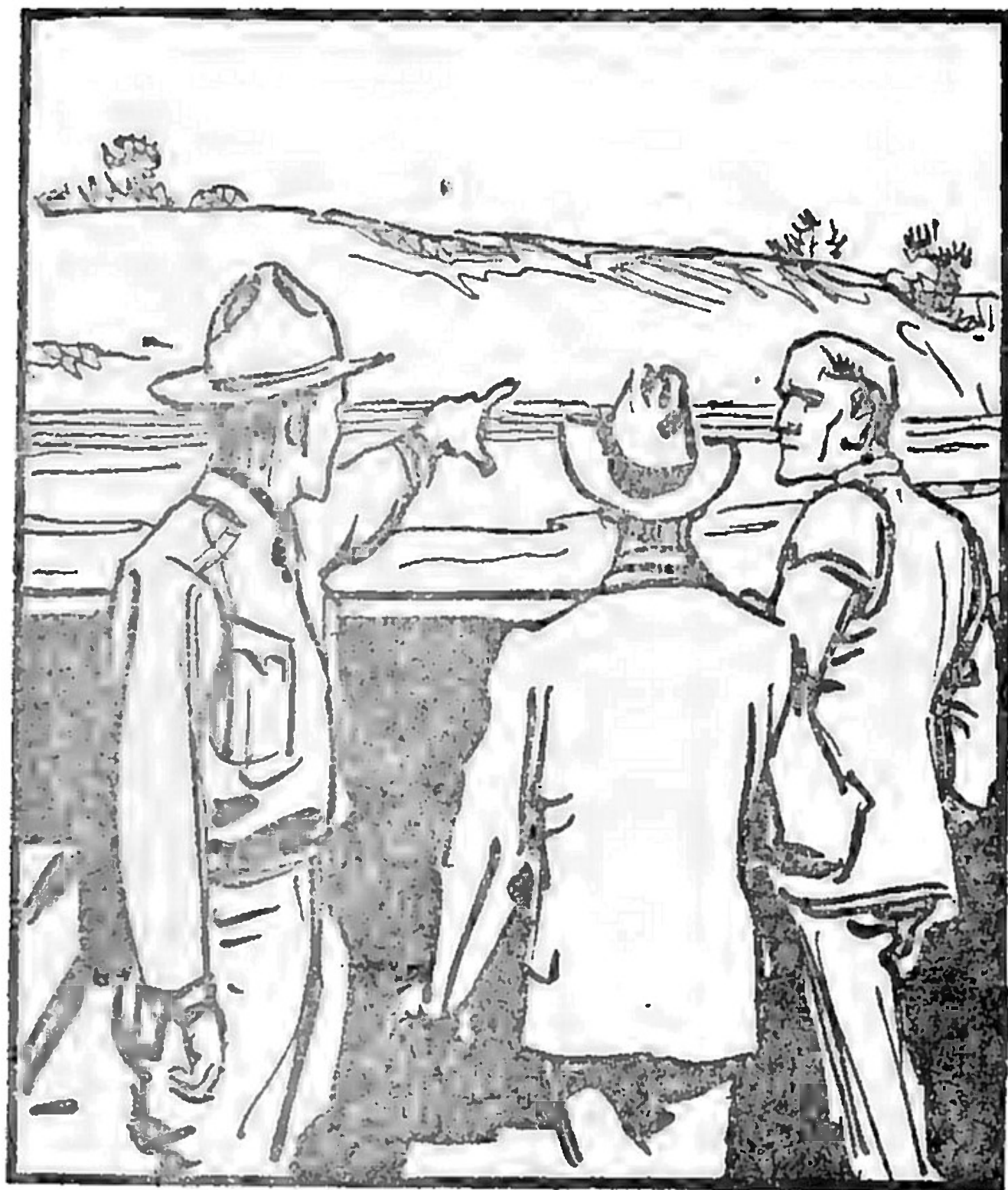
The refugees on the junk heard it. They seemed to realize that



The Launch Made for the Shore

even lying flat on the deck they would not be safe from a rain of death from the skies. They began to get to their feet and look to Mac and his Marines for help and protection from this new danger.

“Listen . . . all of you,” Mac called to them. “We are pulling over to the east shore. If the bombers should mistake us for Chinese troops and attack before we reach the gunboat you must all take to

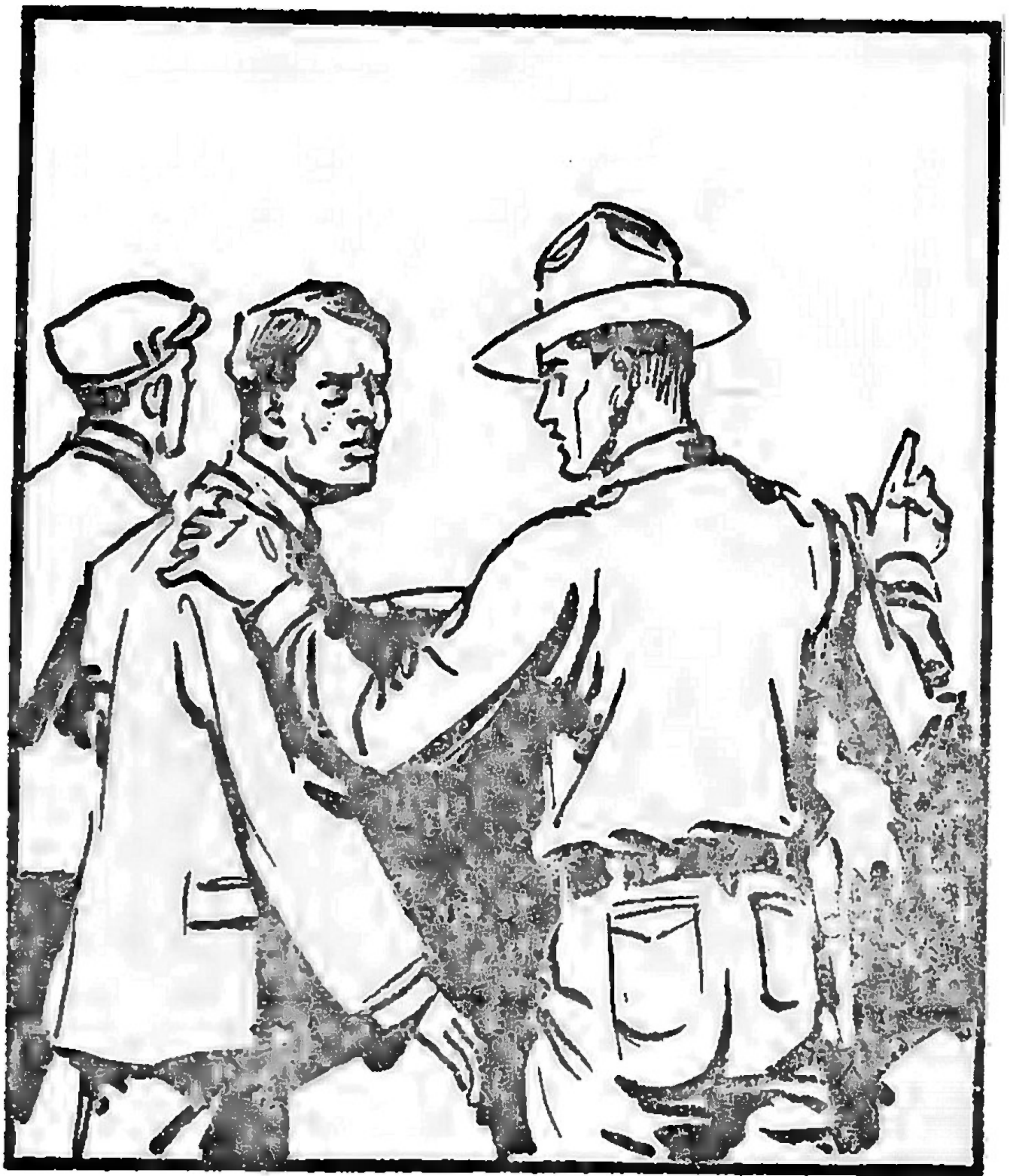


Mac Prepared for the Attack

the water. Every man who can swim step forward!"

All but two of the men gathered around Mac. He quickly ordered them to stand by the two men, the children, and the women who could not swim.

"If it is necessary to abandon the junk," Mac added, "all of you must make for shore and scatter. Do not gather in groups no matter what happens."



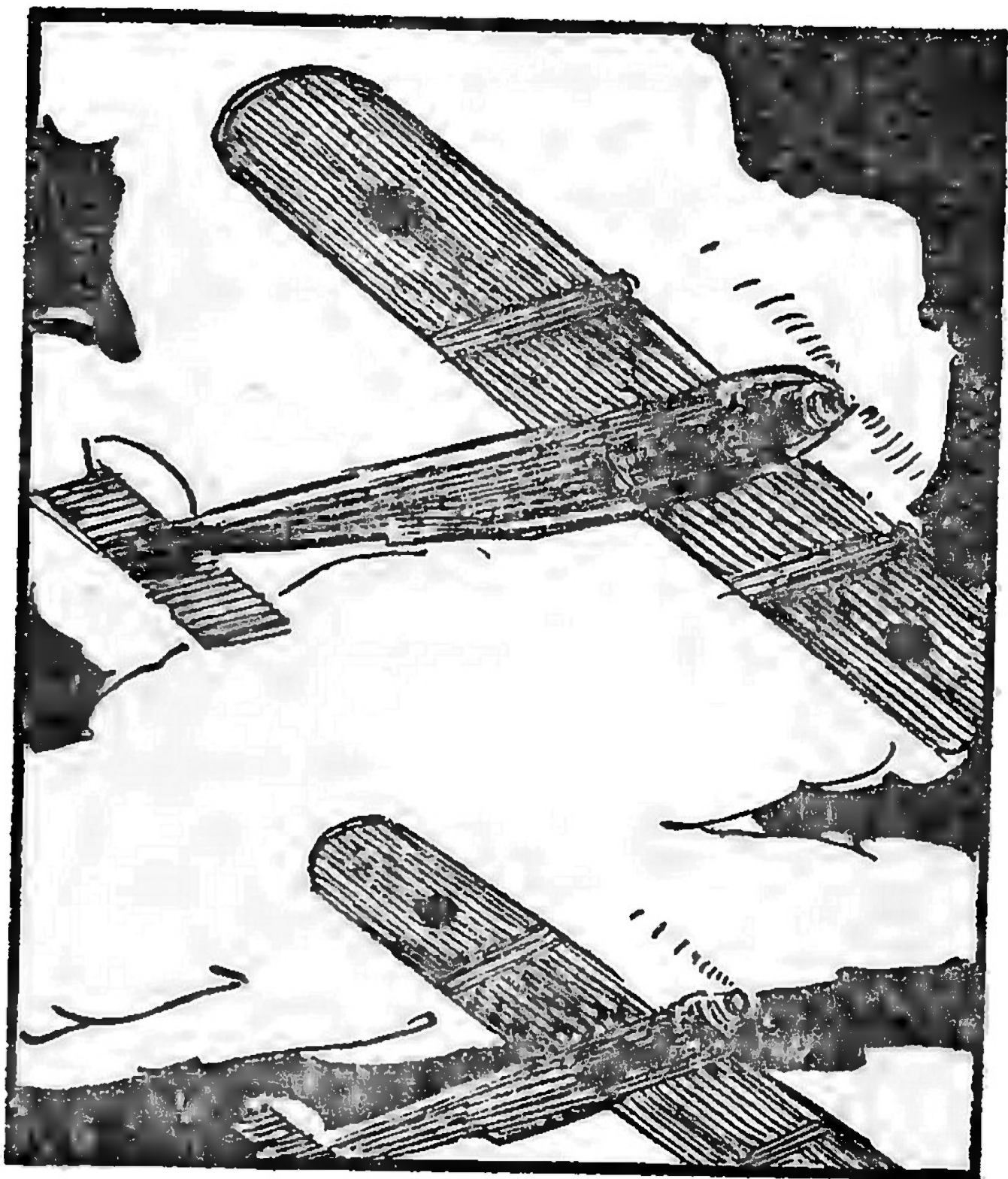
He Gave the Men Instructions

By the time Mac had taken all possible precautions against disaster, the launch and junk were near to the eastern shore of the Liho.

The bombers were close now. They were still flying high and on a course that would take them directly over the junk.

Ann lightly touched Mac's arm.

"What will we do about Mrs. Carson?" she asked. "It would



The Bombers Were Coming Nearer

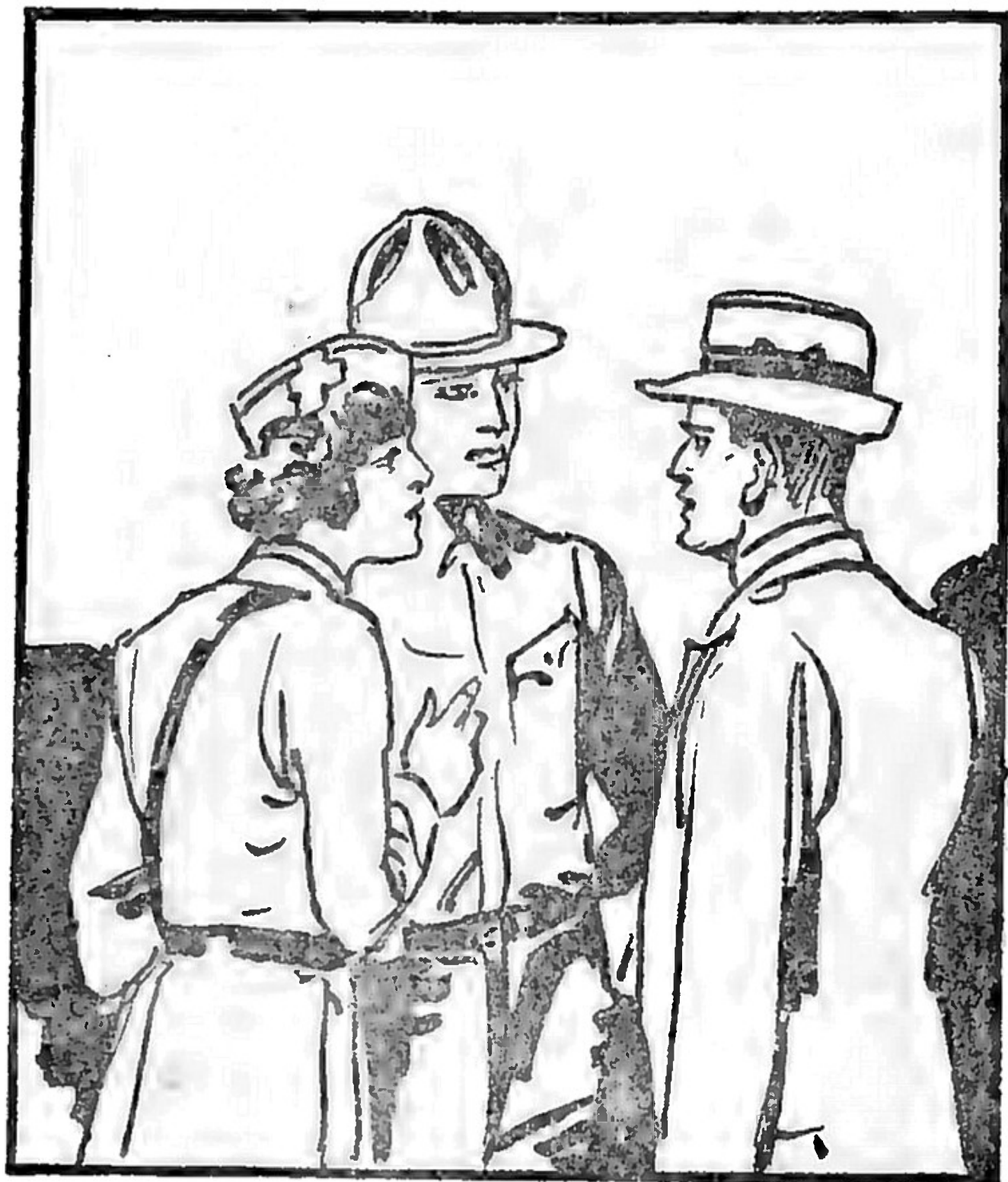
mean her death if she had to get in the water."

"We'll take her off in the launch," Mac answered without taking his eyes from the oncoming bombers.

Carson joined Mac and Ann.

"Wouldn't it be better if we abandoned the junk without waiting for them to attack?" he asked nervously.

"That would be sure to attract



Carson Made a Suggestion

their attention," Mac replied. "As it is they may be headed for Nanking. There's a good chance they'll pass on."

"If we only had an American flag!" Ann cried.

"It wouldn't help much," Mac answered. "From ten thousand feet all flags look pretty much alike, unless they're as big as a house."

Fearfully, the group watched the winged messengers of death.



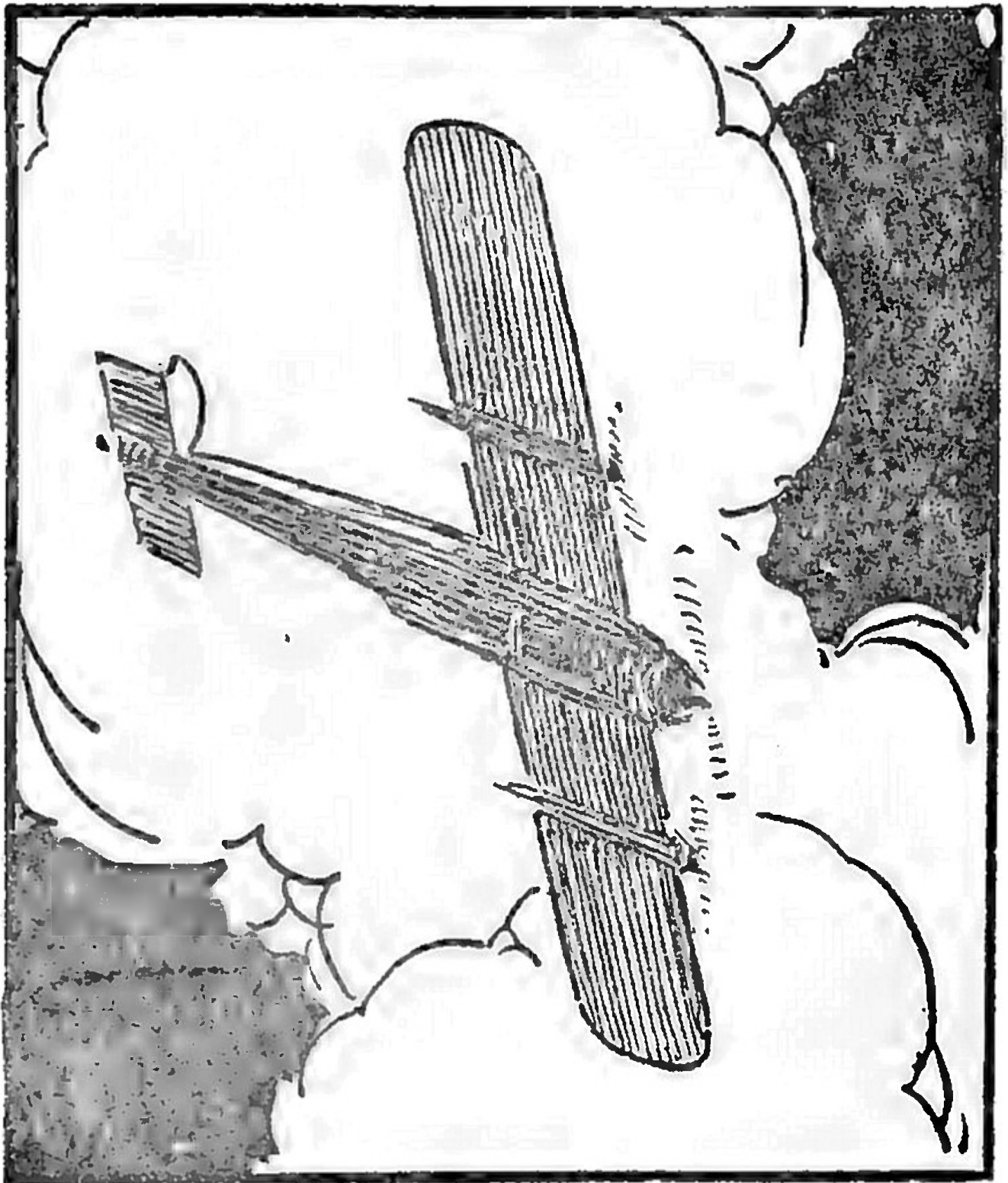
“If We Only Had an American Flag!”

Everyone on junk and launch had seen the deadly effectiveness of those Japanese bombers as they spread terror over China.

The bombers were almost directly overhead now. For a moment it looked as if they might fly on, but suddenly the leading plane of the "V" dipped and banked. The others followed suit.

Mac's orders rang out.

"They're going to attack," he

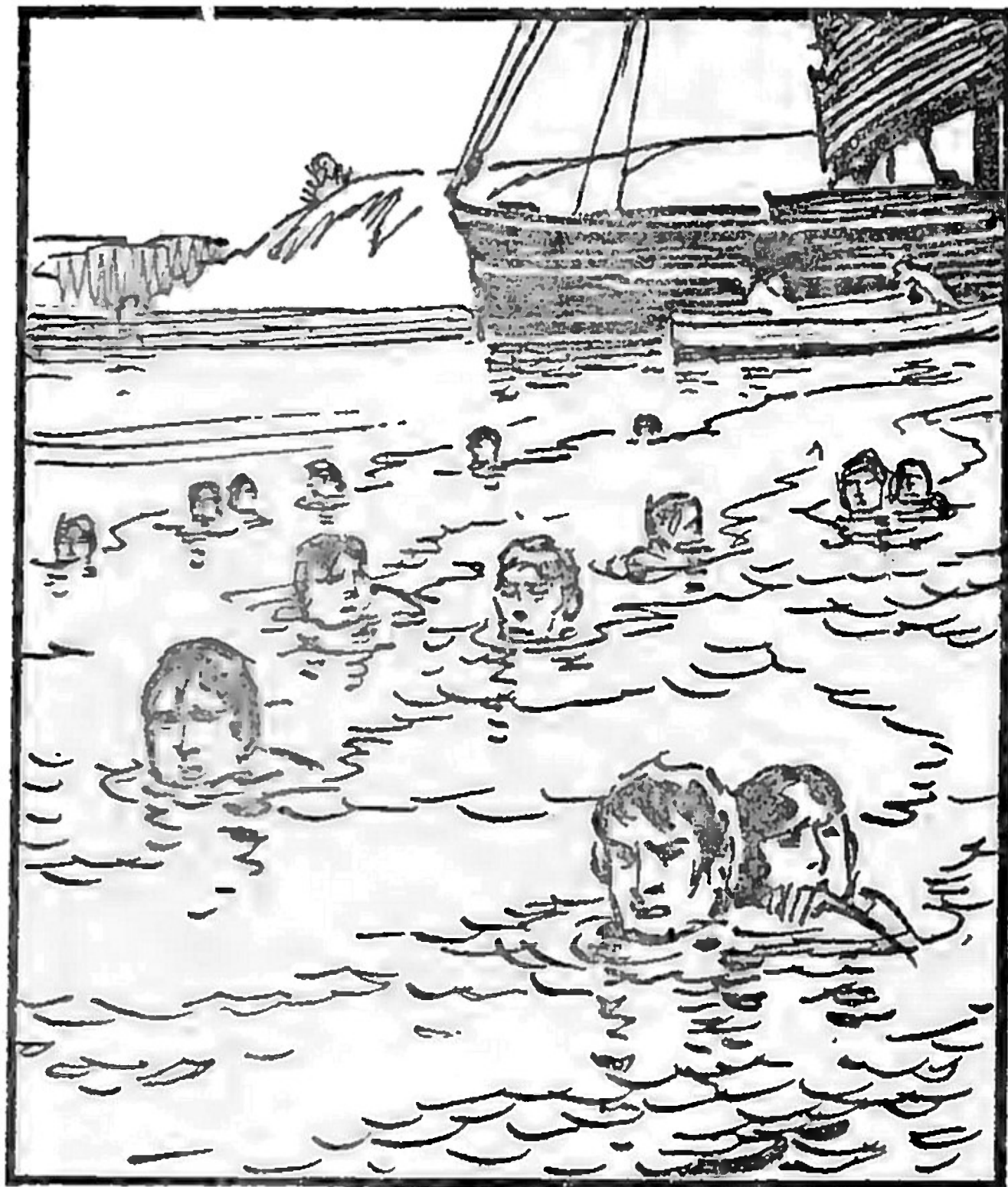


The Leading Plane Dipped and Banked

shouted. "Into the water . . . all of you!"

The refugees needed no second urging.

Mac's preparations for just such an eventuality were justified in the next few minutes. Before the bombers could swing around into a position where they could dive and unloose their cargo of death and destruction, the refugees were off the junk and most of them had

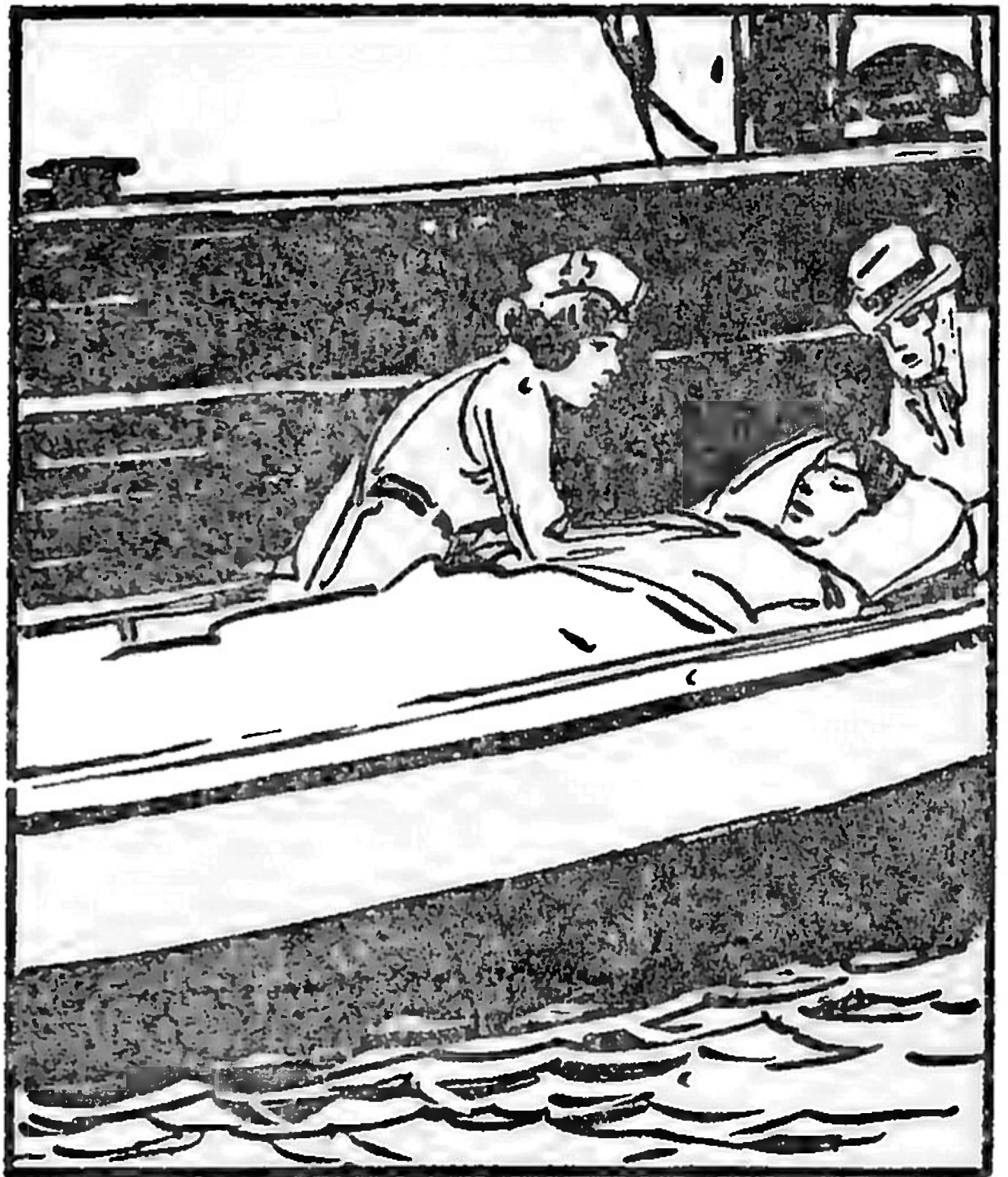


All the Refugees Made for Shore

safely reached the shore and scattered among the willows that lined the bank.

In the meantime Mac had signaled the launch to cut loose from the junk and come alongside. Mrs. Carson was quickly lowered into the launch.

As the launch moved shoreward toward the cover of a patch of overhanging willows, the bombers came over. They had dropped



Mrs. Carson Was Lowered into the Launch

down to a bare five hundred feet, and as they swept over the junk a dozen bombs dropped from the racks of the leading planes. They hurtled downward as the bombers swept on and turned in a wide circle to come back and renew the attack.

The bombs struck all around the drifting junk. The detonation was deafening. A wall of muddy water shot skyward and blotted



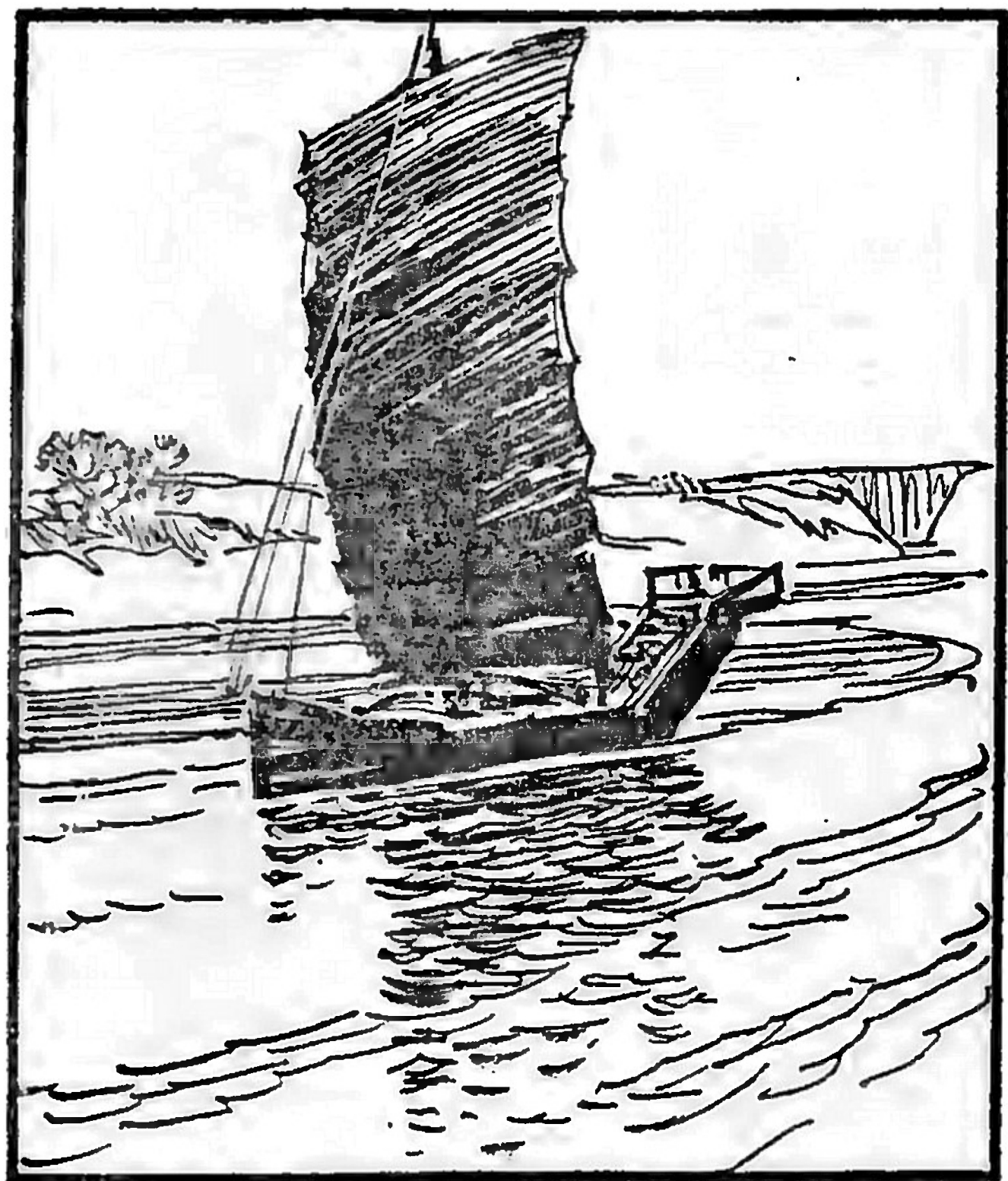
They Hid Beneath a Patch of Willows

the junk from the sight of Mac and his companions, crouched in the launch less than a hundred yards away.

An instant later the wall of water fell back into the Liho revealing the ancient junk rocking gently in the churning water but otherwise intact.

"Of all the rotten bombing," one Marine laughed.

"Keep down," Mac warned.

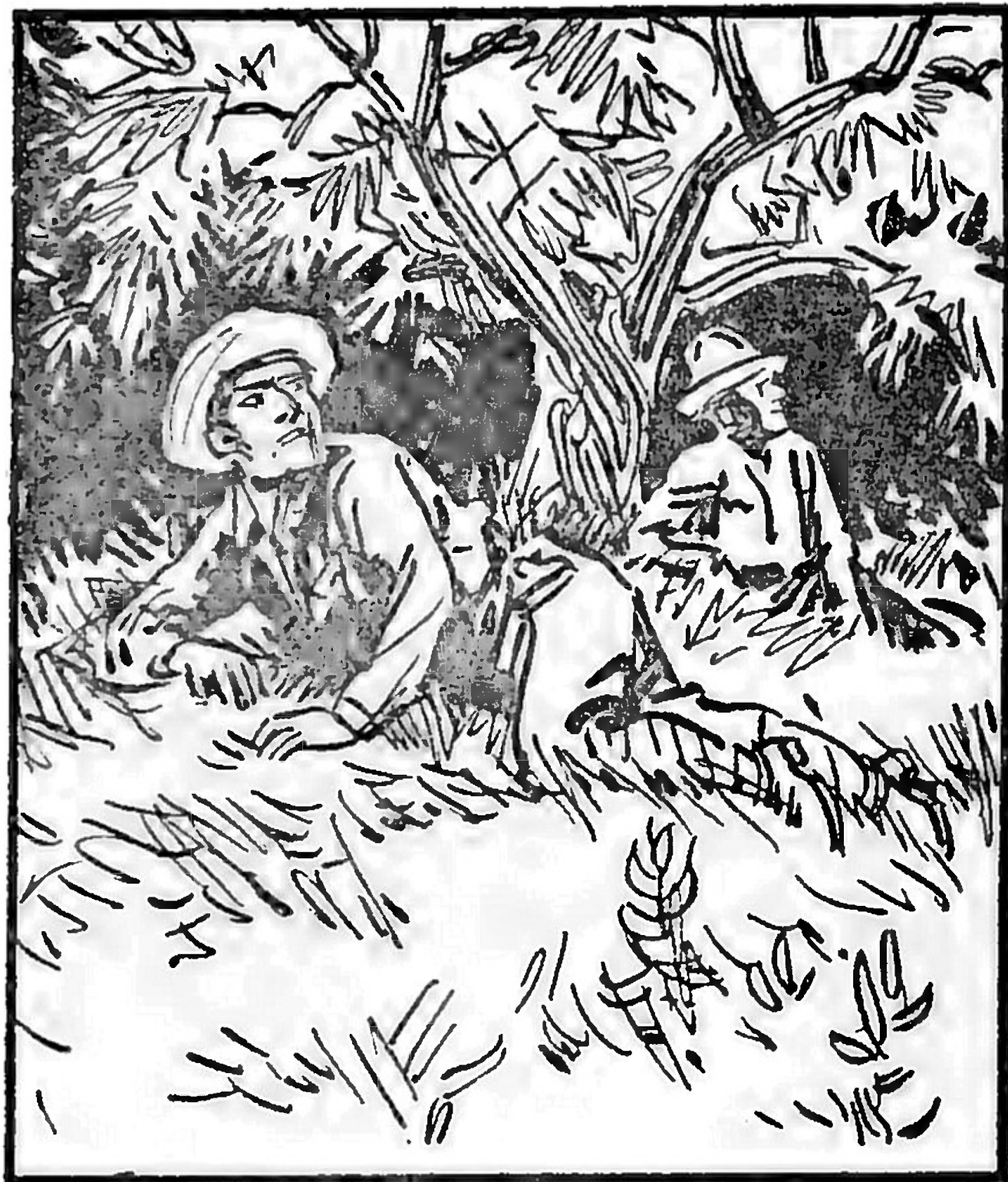


The Junk Remained Intact

“They’re coming back.”

“Yeah,” Corporal Shorty replied scornfully. “They’ll score a hit sooner or later, but I’ll bet two to one they’ll waste five thousand dollars worth of bombs to blow up a junk you couldn’t sell for twenty-five. Some war!”

Again the bombers roared overhead and again they missed, but one bomb fell dangerously close to the willows shielding the launch.



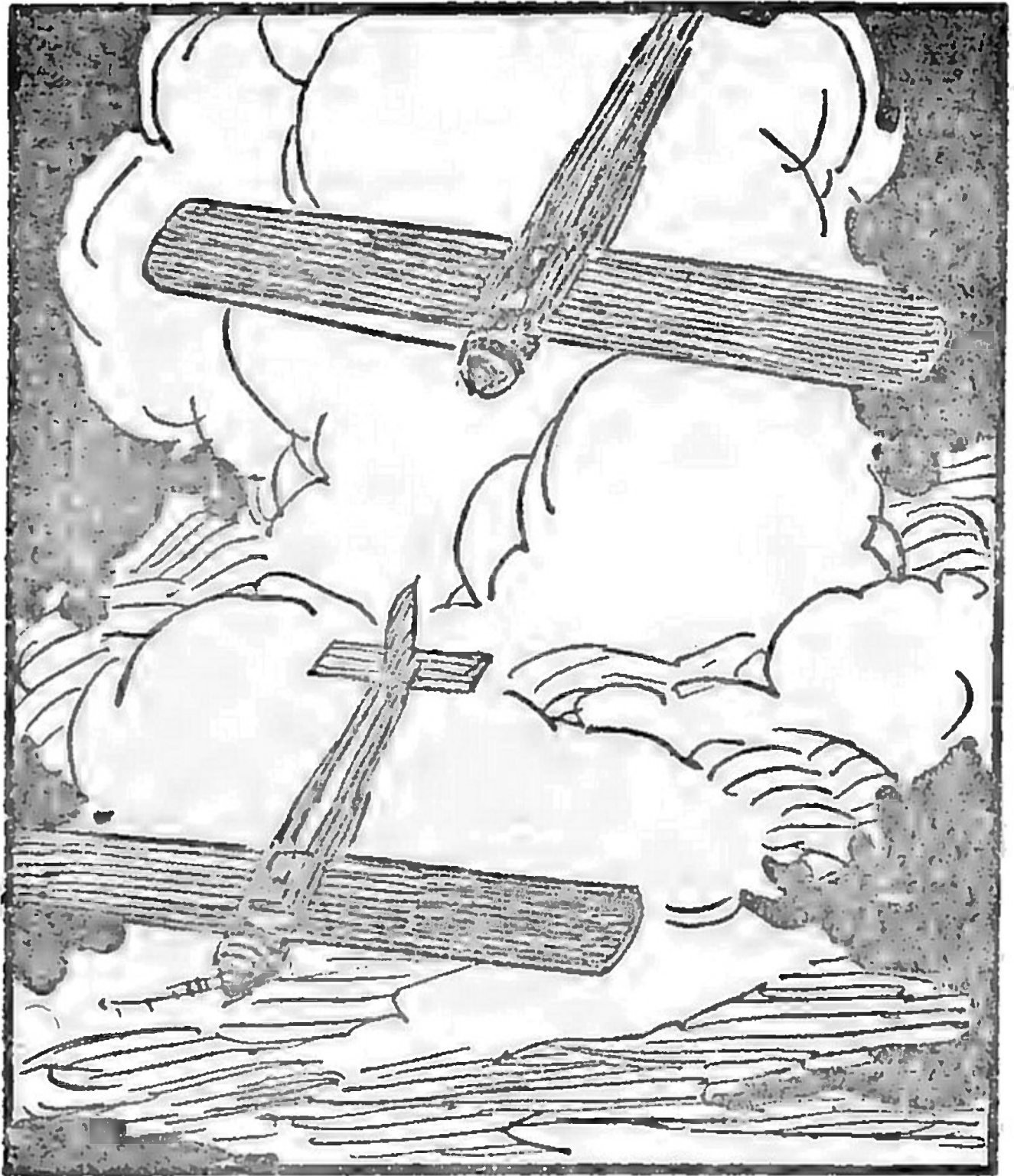
They Watched the Bombers Overhead

“They’ll be out of bombs pretty soon at the rate they’re going,” was Shorty’s only comment.

The launch rocked violently from the waves caused by exploding bombs.

For the third time the bombers swung back. This time they were just above the tree tops. The bombers had changed from a “V” to a follow-the-leader formation.

“The crazy fools,” Mac mutter-



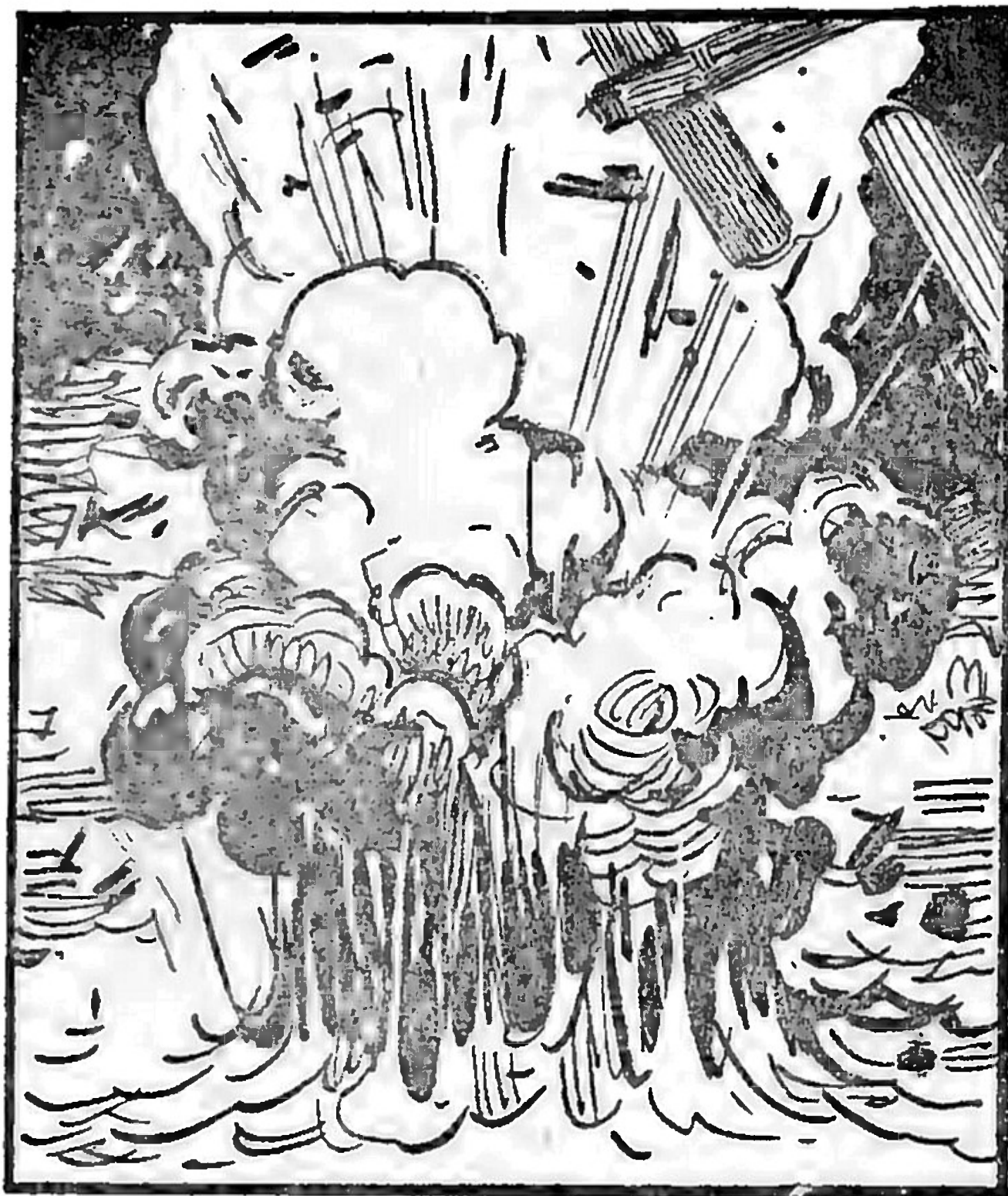
Foollow the Leader Formation

ed. "Heaven help them if the leading plane scores a hit!"

Mac had scarcely uttered his prophetic words when the leading bomber released three bombs.

It was a direct hit!

The ancient junk seemed to leap out of the water. Its tumbers hurtled skyward, and into that mass of wreckage flew the second and third bombers. The ships were literally torn to pieces, and they plunged



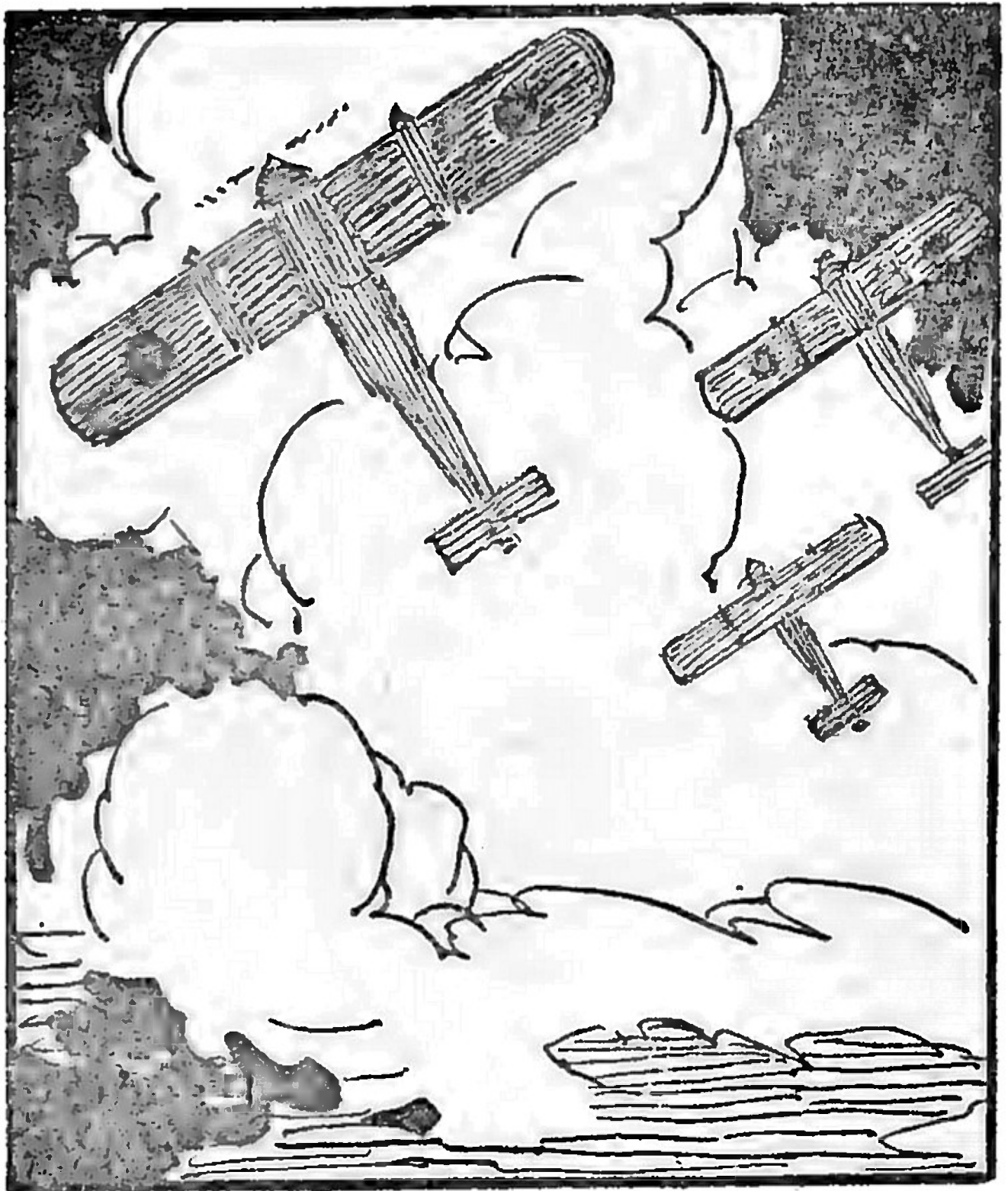
It Was a Direct Hit

into the muddy waters of the Liho with a resounding roar.

The remaining bombers saw the fate of their companions in time to zoom skyward and avoid a like fate.

“Talk about man biting dog,” Shorty cried out. “Junk destroys two bombers. Tie that!”

“Wait,” Mac called suddenly, for above the drone on the bombers he heard an even more dreaded sound.



The Remaining Bombers Zoomed Skyward

It was the same chilling sound he had heard on the lonely road to Shotang.

It was the eerie, whacking sound of a pursuit ship power-diving to attack!



“Wait!” Mac Called Suddenly

CHAPTER XV

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES!

Mac parted the willow branches overhead and glanced up. At first he thought a Chinese fighting plane had joined in the fray, but the ship was a seaplane and from its wing markings Mac knew it was a plane from Sito's squadron.



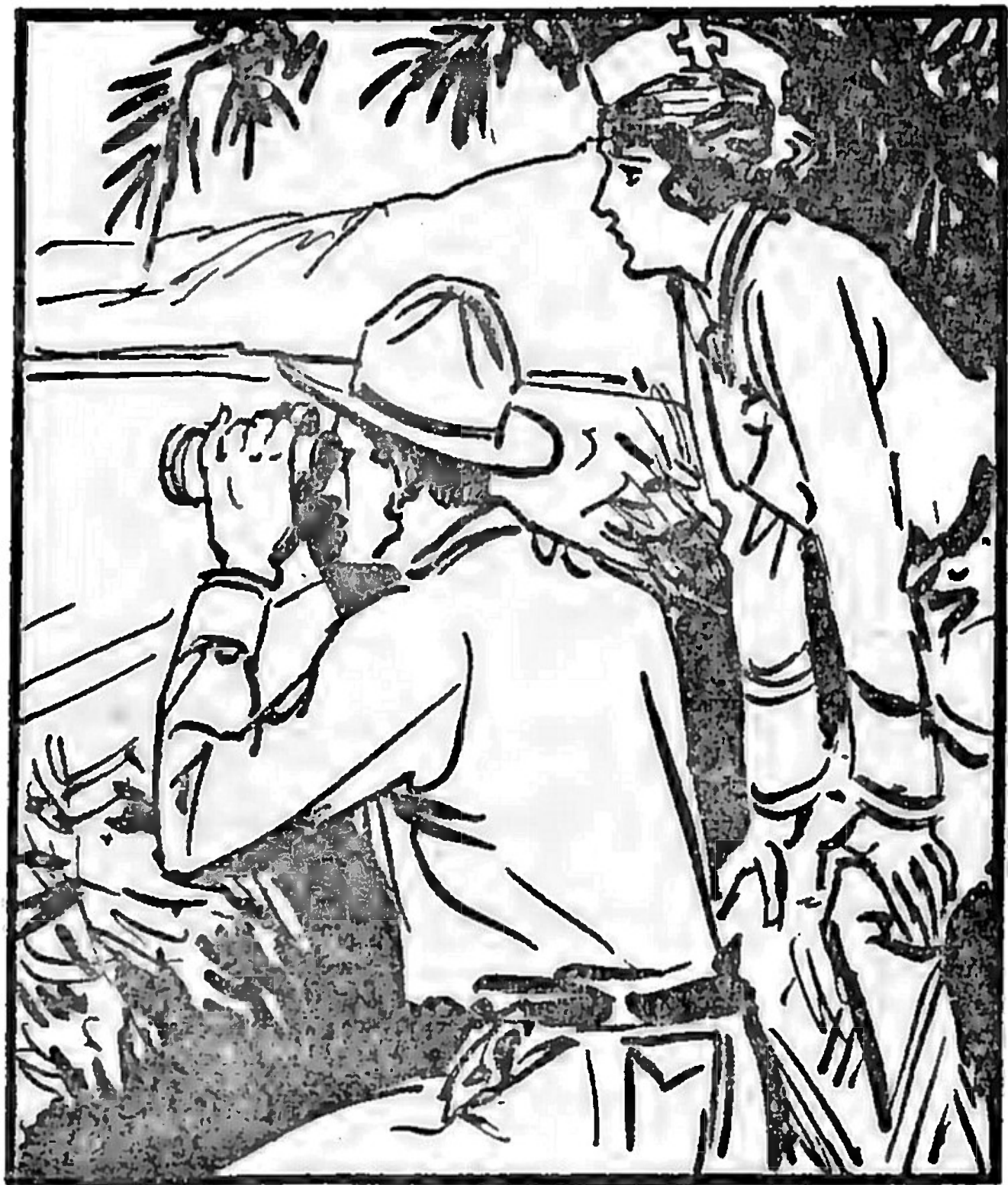
Mac Glanced Up

At first it looked as if the pilot had sighted some of the refugees on the river bank, but a moment later the plane banked sharply and swung into position for a long glide to the surface of the river.

“He’s going to land and try to pick up the crew of those two bombers,” Ann gasped in relief.

“Looks like it,” Mac replied.

Taking up a pair of field glasses he studied the seaplane as it came



He Studied the Seaplane

down on the river and taxied toward the mass of wreckage now drifting downstream.

“What a perfect target he’d make for any Chinese troops on the other bank,” Shorty grunted.

“Ann,” Mac said suddenly and handed the field glasses to her, “Japs look a lot alike but I’ll bet my last dollar that’s our friend Sito!”

Ann gazed through the field glasses a moment.



Ann Watched the New Arrival

“I’m sure of it!” Ann exclaimed. “Is there any way we can let him know who we are?”

Mac shook his head.

“It would be too risky. He might open up with his machine gun before he realized who we were. Besides, those bombers are still around.”

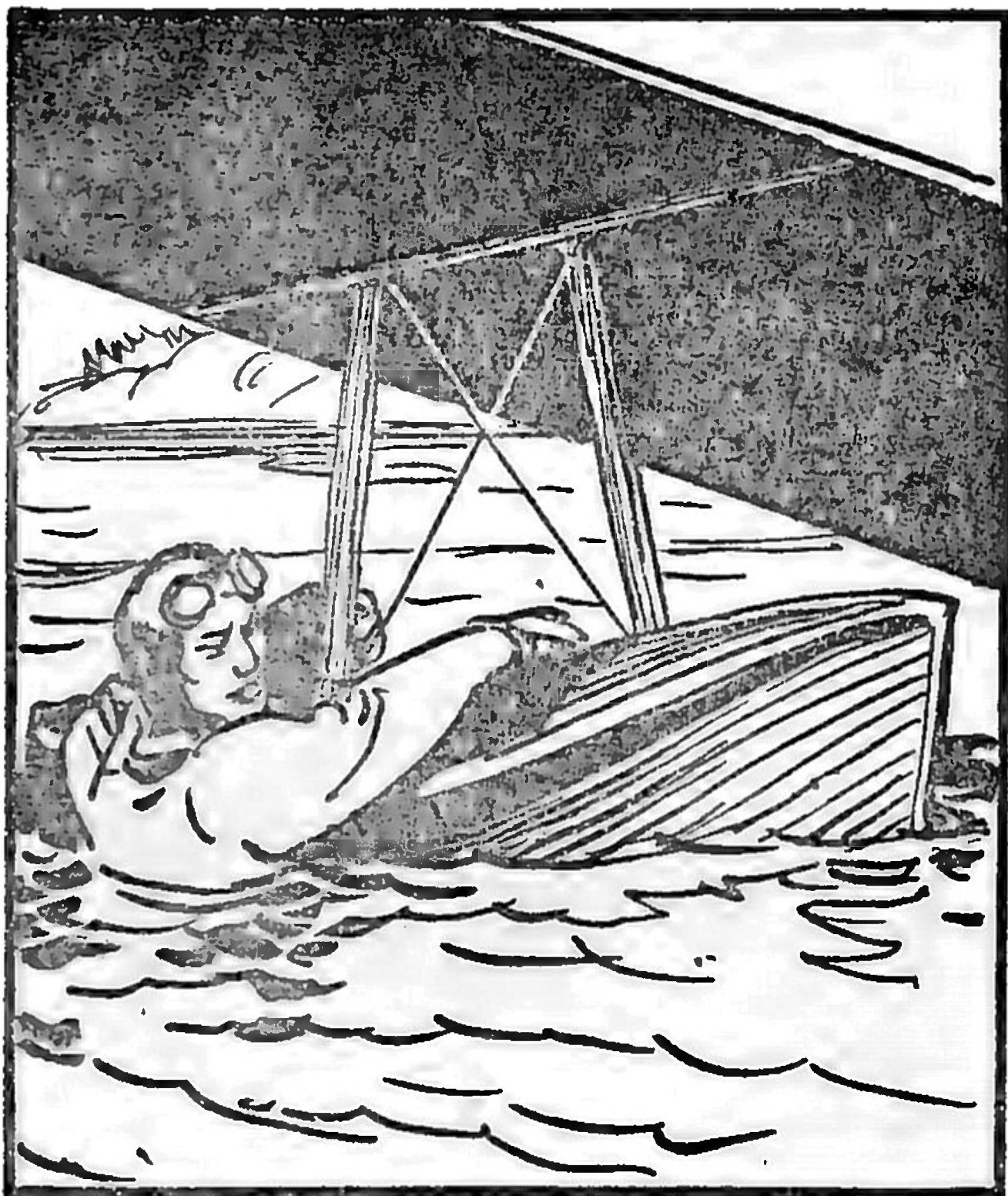
“A couple of the bombers’ crew seem to be alive, Mac,” Shorty cut in. “He’s picking them up.”



They Were Unable to Help

Unable to help, Mac and his party watched Sito maneuver his seaplane among the wreckage. They saw him rescue three, and they were clinging to the pontoons when again the situation was changed. Another plane zoomed over the tree tops with a thundering roar. This time it was a Chinese land plane!

“Now the fat’s in the fire,” Mac groaned. “Sito will never be able

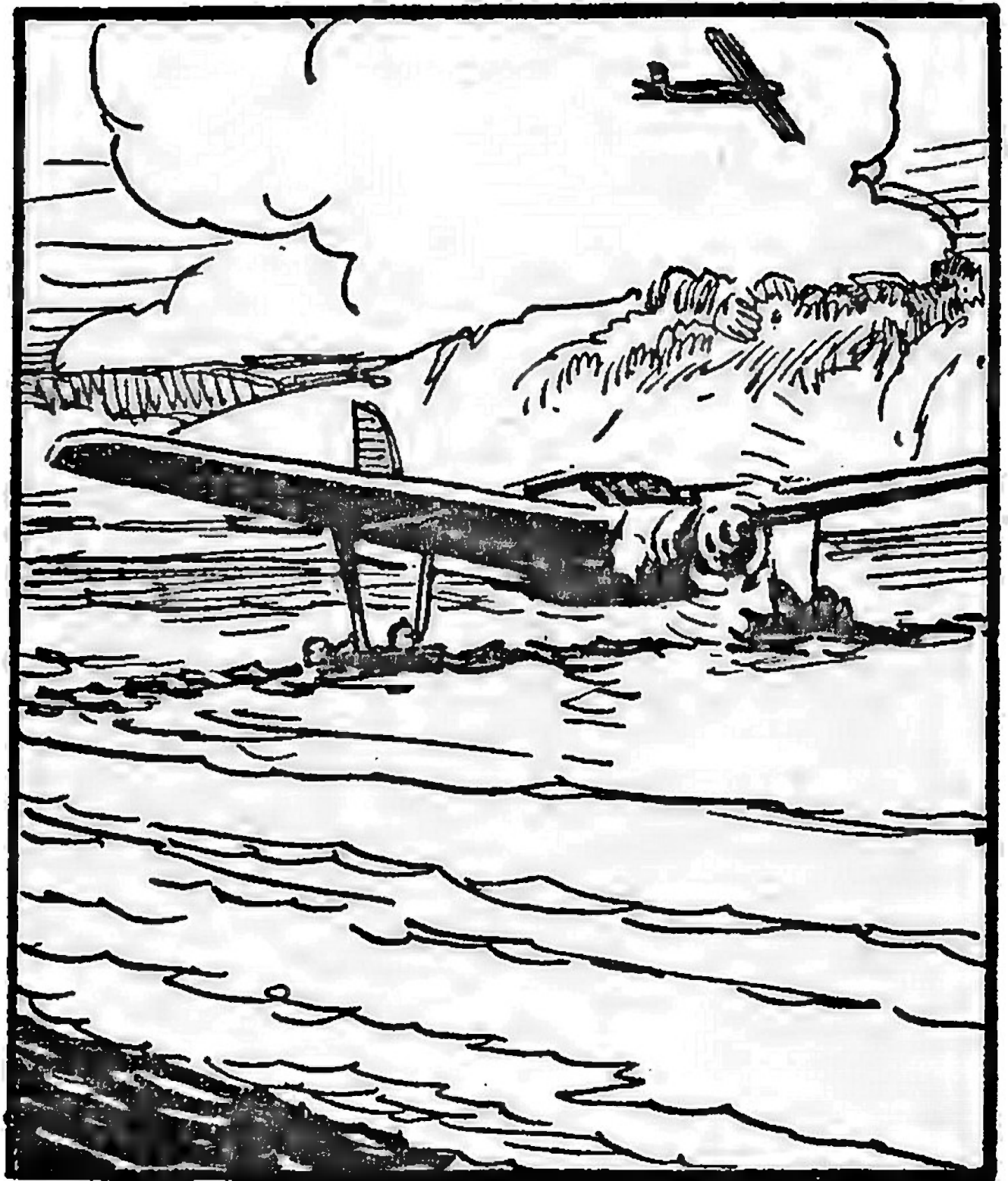


The Man Clung to the Pontoon

to take off the river with those men on his pontoons.”

“If he doesn’t shake them off and get in the air that Chinese plane will tear him to pieces,” Shorty commented grimly.

Even as they watched, Sito gunned his motor. He was going to try to take off with the three men on the pontoons. His plane was a single-seater. There was no other place for them.

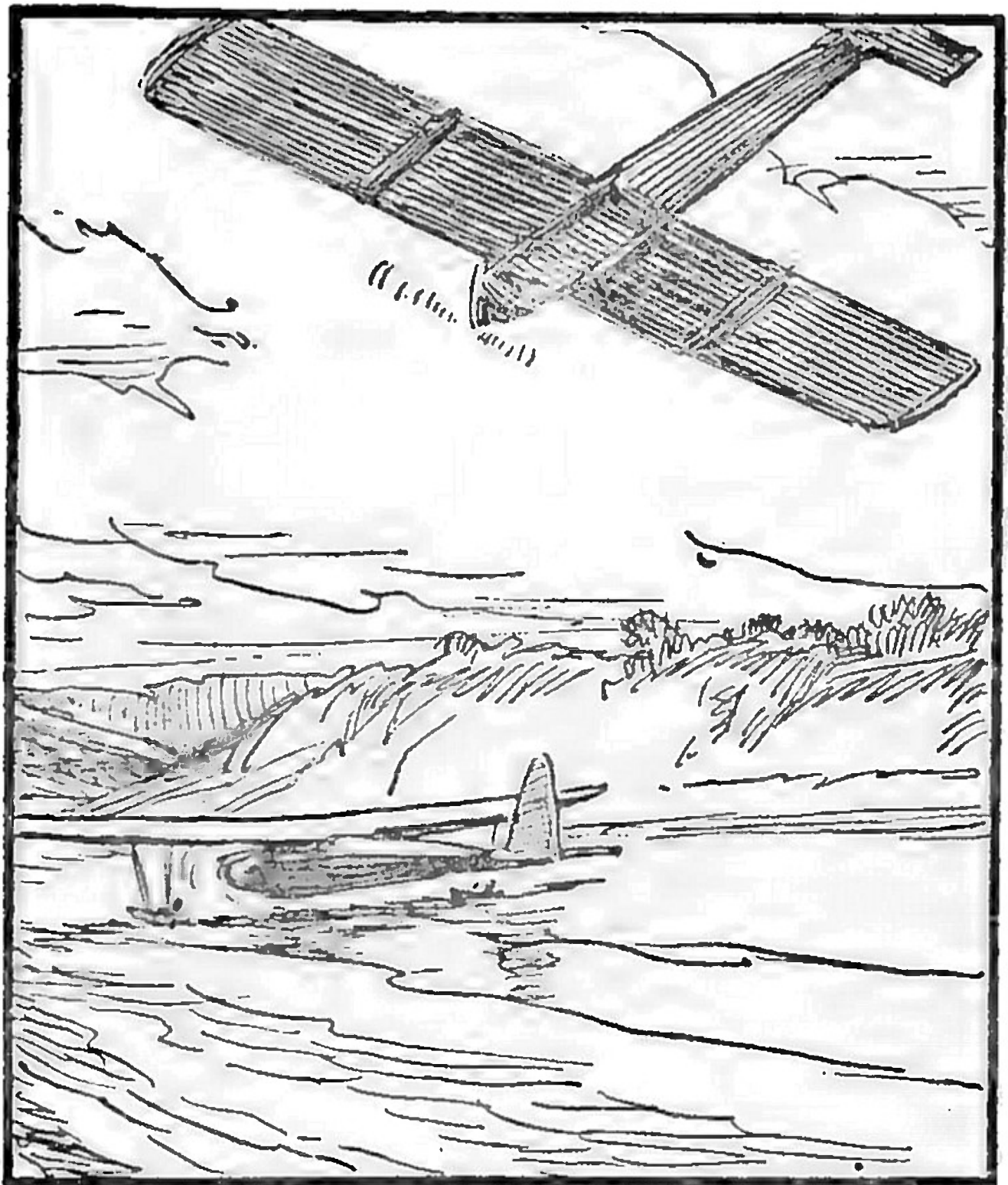


The Plane Could Not Take Off

“He’ll never do it,” Mac said as he watched the young Jap try in vain to lift his overladen plane from the surface of the river.

The Chinese plane dived at him and overshot his mark. But a minute later he had banked and was coming back again. Zigzagging on the surface of the river but unable to rise, the Japanese plane race downstream.

“Our gunboat at the mouth of



The Enemy Plane Flew Overhead

the Liho!" Mac cried. "It's hardly more than a mile and Sito's sighted it."

"If he can make it he can drop those men and get in the air," Ann exclaimed hopefully.

As the moments passed it became evident that this was exactly what the young Japanese pilot was trying to do.

"Say," Shorty called out suddenly. "There's something funny

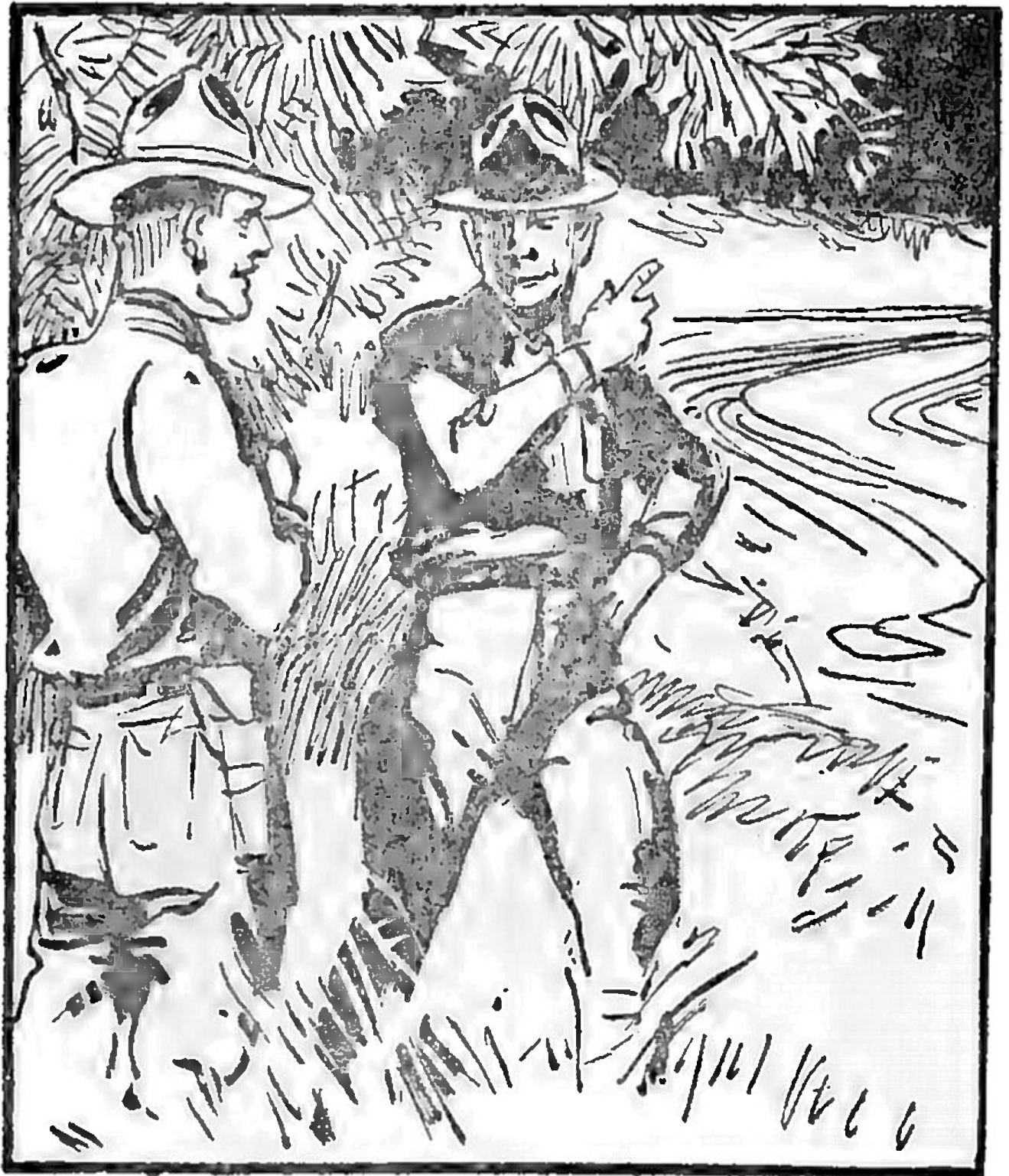


They Watched Breathlessly

going on. That Chinese plane has flown over the Jap twice. He's had a perfect target both times but he didn't even fire!"

"Well, there's such a thing as sportsmanship . . . even in war," Mac replied.

By that time both planes were out of sight around the last bend of the Liho before it joined the Yangtze. The bombers had disappeared and Mac again turned his



"There's Something Funny Going On."

attention to getting his refugees down to the gunboat. Since the junk was completely destroyed it would be impossible for all the party to be taken downstream at one time.

Mac assigned all but two of his uninjured marines to round up the scattered group and stand guard.

“We’ll work down to the gunboat and send the launch back for the rest,” Mac explained.



The Marines Guarded the Refugees

Keeping the launch close to the sheltering east bank, Mac and the first group finally reached the gunboat. There were shouts of joy as they were helped over the side. As Mac climbed aboard he saw three Japanese pilots on stretchers, being treated by the gunboat's surgeon.

“What happened to that Japanese pilot?” Mac asked as Lieutenant Harris came forward.

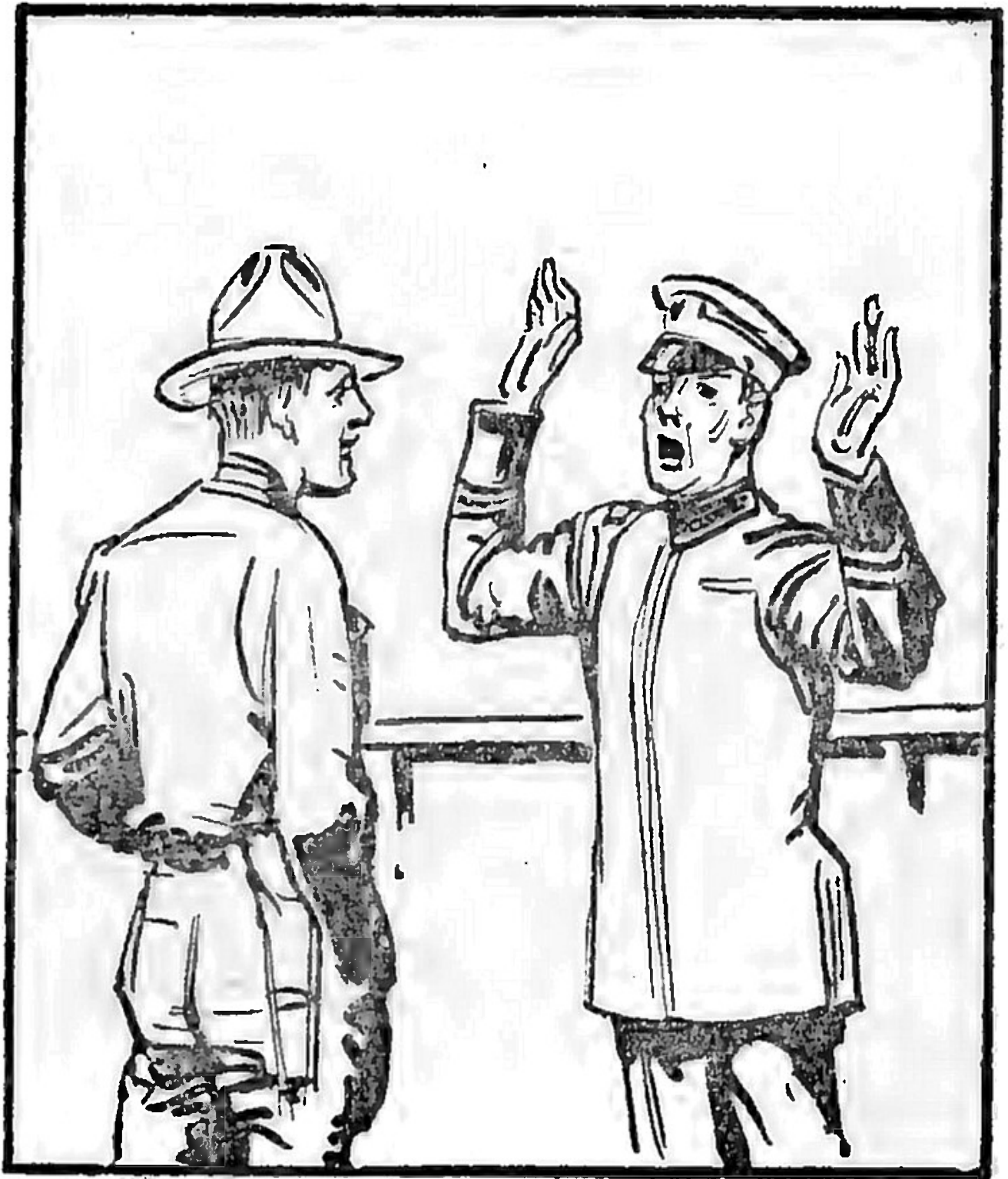


The Japanese Pilots Were on Board

“It was the craziest thing I’ve ever seen,” Harris replied. “That Jap came down river with a Chinese plane on his tail. He dropped these three men off his pontoons and took off.”

“Did the Chinese plane get him before he had a chance to gain altitude?” Mac pressed.

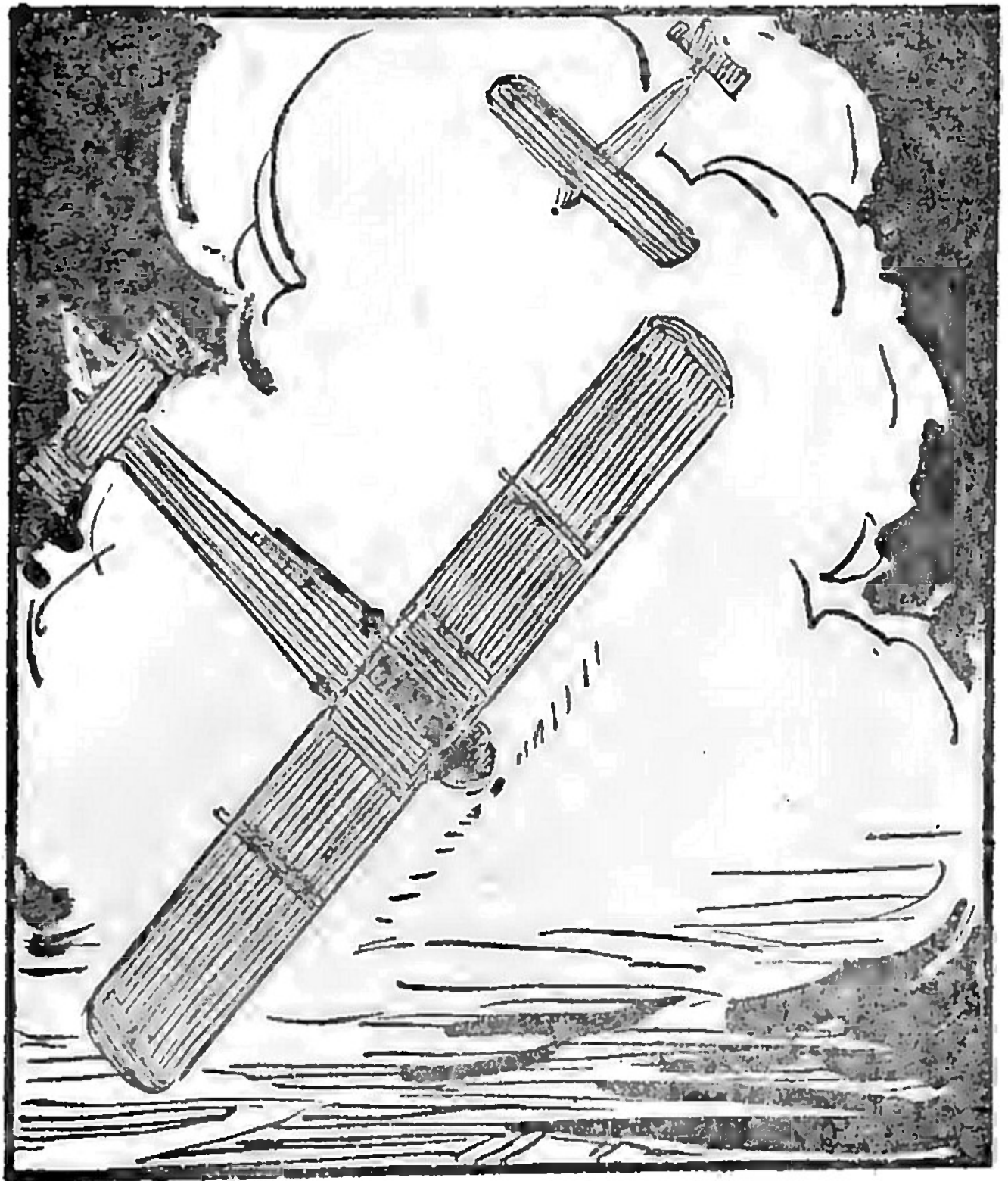
“No,” Harris replied. “That’s what floored me. The Chinese plane didn’t attack but he followed the



“It Was the Craziest Thing I’ve Ever Seen.”

Jap up to a thousand feet. Then he fired a few bursts of machine-gun bullets that must have missed the Jap by a mile. Then the Jap banked and fired a few rounds that couldn't possibly have been meant to hit anything. Then to top it off the two planes dipped as if they were saluting each other and flew off in opposite directions."

"Mac," Ann Kelly cried. "It doesn't seem possible but I'm sure



“As if Saluting Each Other.”

the pilot of the Chinese plane must have been our other friend from Shotang . . . Chang!"

"It begins to look like it, Ann," Mac replied.

"Yes, and they must have recognized each other, Sito and Chang! They must have remembered what you told them about missing the target!"

"Let's hope so and let's hope they don't have to meet again in war

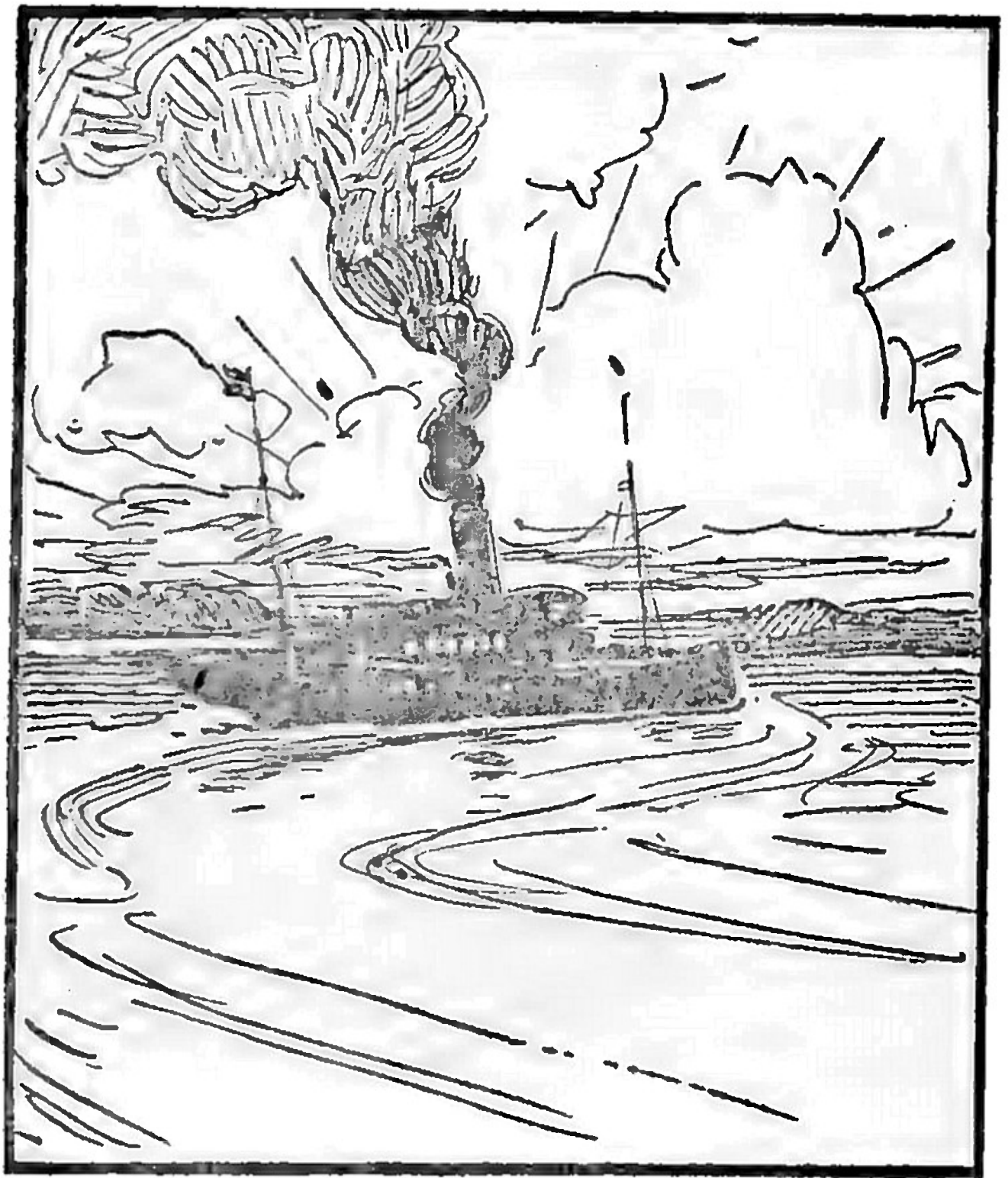


“They Remembered What You Told Them.”

planes," Mac added. "But right now we've got a job to finish!"

By sundown the job was finished. That night refugees of stricken Saung were sleeping soundly below deck on the gunboat as it cruised down the Yangtze to Shanghai.

Mac of the Marines had successfully completed another dangerous assignment!



The Gunboat Cruised Toward Safety

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